

Title: Phoenix Eclipse

Summary: When he was 10, Harry Potter was declared a Death Eater by his family. 5 years later, he has returned but is he willing to join in the war to help the brother who turned on him?

Category: Alternate Universe, Wrong BWL, Dark Harry

Rating: T (may change as the story continues)

Pairing: Canon pairings

Warnings: Possible violence in future chapters (may change)

## Chapter One- The Suha Siblings

Shyamal Suha silently guided his Seraphina mount toward the ancient home where he, his younger twin brothers, and his sister had been staying for over four years, ever since he had been deemed a Death Eater by the wizarding world and his younger siblings dead. He sighed into the cold Carpathian air, his breath a white mist. That night, the illusion of home with the Potters had forever been shattered, a thousand fragments of silver glass that slipped between his innocent child fingers.

He had led his wounded brothers and sister away from the murderous hunting party toward the coast. Shyamal would have died that night if it hadn't been for the black phoenix that had found them huddling on the edges of a cliff, trying desperately to stay warm in the unusually cold August night. One minute, Shyamal had been staring at the deadly silver face of the moon that hung in the sky above them when the phoenix had appeared, a ghostly apparition. At first, he thought he was hallucinating but the soft brushes of the feathers snapped him out of the daze. When the phoenix had widened her tail plume in invitation, he had his siblings take a feather, placing his trust in the magical creature. With a flash of black fire, they had appeared before the King of the Blood Elves.

Shaken and wary, Shyamal had asked for help for his brothers before passing out.

The flaming hooves of his mount clattered onto the paved stones of the main street of the ancient Elven city, the royal palace appearing out from the cold mist of the mornings. As he rode on by, the early risers waved at him from their chores. Around him, the Blood trees rose high above him, their red leaves creating a dark red canopy above him, casting clear red shadows on the silvery white trunks.

Nestled among the growth lay the ancestral homes of the Elves themselves, hidden from prying eyes while on the ground, stood the marble buildings used for visitors.

The next morning after their appearance, they were taken in by the daughter of the King and given new names.

That day Harry James Potter, Alexander Julian Potter, Daniel Jonathon Potter, and Evangeline Potter ceased to exist.

In their stead, only the Suha siblings stood; Shyamal the eldest, the werewolf twins Cosmas and Damian, and Hala, the feisty sister.

Shyamal reined in the Seraphina as he neared the royal stables, wondering if his brothers and sister were awake yet. Dismounting, he handed the reins over to the Elven worker waiting off to the side.

"King Shahriar is waiting for you in the study, young Shyamal."

"Thanks Aeolfwe." The Royal palace of the Blood Elves was not as great as the ones built by the humans in the ages past but it was no less grand. Carved deep into the mountains itself with magic and the hands of the Elves, the palace was a natural beauty. Halls stretched with high windows allowing the sunlight to filter into the palace, gardens placed strategically to keep the feel of the Earth all around. The natural rivers were preserved as they ran toward the Mures River that wove its way through the Carpathian passes and Magical Romania to the Dead Sea. At first, Shyamal had been surprised when he had stepped out from his assigned room to see a large garden with a waterfall at one end and a second one at the other. Almost five years living here had him calling it home now.

Passing through the Main Hall, he walked to the study. Opening the oak doors, he noticed his siblings and the Royal family was there. Giving a brief bow to the King as was custom, he moved to the seat next to Cosmas.

The King wasted no time. "No doubt, Shyamal, you are wondering why you have been summoned here from your training with Master Miroslav but the matter at hand cannot be ignored further." King Shahriar leaned forward, his golden eyes boring into Shyamal's emerald ones. "We have tried to keep up to date on the dealings

between the Ministries of the Wizards and we have learned there are rumors that Lord Voldemort has returned to his corporal body."

Shyamal's fingers tightened on the armrests of the chair. "My brother-

"He has not been harmed except for the small wound Pettigrew placed on him when gathering the blood necessary for Voldemort's return." Shahriar stated quietly. "Alas, it is not the only troubling news however. Despite warnings from the Potters, Headmaster Dumbledore, and the various members of the Order of the Phoenix, Minister Fudge is refusing the claim of the Dark Lord's return."

Damian and Cosmas started to sputter angrily but Shyamal raised a hand, giving a warning with his look. "Sorry, Master Shahriar."

The Blood Elf King smiled lightly. "I must agree with your brothers on this. Voldemort will no doubt use the time the Ministry has given him to gather his forces that have scattered these past fifteen years. Already, the Headmaster at Durmstrang has fled his post as he was a known Death Eater."

Shyamal raked a hand through his raven hair, feeling a headache coming on. "There's a reason why you are telling us this, isn't there, Master Shahriar?"

Akane Siofra, the Crown Princess spoke up, her amber eyes cast in shadow. "Despite what they have done to you and your brothers, Shyamal, we know you still care for your parents and your older brother." The female Elf saw the disbelieving look on Shyamal's face. "Why else have you trained in arts of war? Why else have you made sure you knew how to disarm an opponent and shield others to the best of your protection?" Her eyes drifted to the twins. "Why else have you learned how to heal a torn body?" To Hala who was sitting quietly in the crook of Damian's arm. "Why else have you stayed together and learned magic and knowledge no child your age would ever be interested in?"

"They will be suspicious of us we just suddenly appeared at Hogwarts asking for a spot in their classes." Damian stated quietly, his usual go-lucky demeanor missing.

"The new Headmaster of Durmstrang once lived with us for a number of years with his family. There is no doubt in my mind he will do this as a favor to us. All he needs is to test you first to see where your skills would land to be able to forge documents of your education at Durmstrang. The reason is you know that Hogwarts will be safe from any attack from Voldemort. Even now, Durmstrang and Beauxbatons are in danger of being attacked."

"Because the only man Voldemort ever feared was Dumbledore." Shyamal said softly, gave on the ground. "Hogwarts is the only place he will never fully attack with his forces unless he knows for certain that he can take it." He leaned forward, his elbows resting on his knees as he rubbed at his face. "There's a risk the students will find out about Cosmas and Damian. I will not risk their wellbeing."

The twins gave a huff of annoyance. Cosmas turned to Shyamal. "You know that Dumbledore once hid Lupin's identity as a werewolf from the students. The only person to ever find out about that was Snape because Black wanted to get back at him."

"That was one werewolf. And there's also the fact that I'm a Dark wizard." Shyamal had known that his greatest strength came from using the Dark magics and he would do anything to protect his siblings. Oh, he could use the Lighter magics but they were not as strong as the Dark spells and curses. Shyamal thought that was because the only love he ever felt was for his siblings and to some extent the Elves that had given them shelter but no one else. "Any sign of Dark magic and they will instantly jump on me. Thankfully, none of you are Dark."

"Come on, Sham, you know that being Dark doesn't make one evil." Damian said.

Cosmas leaned toward his twin. "Tell that to the stuck up wankers at the ministry."

"True, true."

"What say you, Shyamal?"

"I don't know. I want to keep my family safe here." Shyamal was torn; Akane was right. He wanted to keep his families safe on both

sides of the English Channel but the dark memories in his mind had him wanting to keep his siblings safe, even from the Potters.

"Shyamal." Everyone looked at Hala whose eyes were focused on her brothers. "It's been a long time and a dark road but they are still family. You know Akane was right. Even though they neglected us and harmed you, they are still family. Edward needs us. Now more than ever as the world will turn on him."

"Five years is a long time, Shyamal. " Cosmas added. "They could have changed." Damian didn't say anything but he could see the pleading look in his brown eyes.

"Alright we'll go."

Shahriar nodded. "I will send word to Headmaster Irfan to create the documents. He will come here to go over them so you will know what is on them. The year will start in about two weeks from now so you will not have to leave for Magical London until one week from now."

"What will we do about the wizard money?"

King Shahriar waved it off. "I'm sure you'll be able to exchange the few gems you have found for money. Considering they came off the homelands of the Blood Elves, they will cost an even prettier penny."

"Perhaps we should also have Headmaster Irfan speak with Dumbledore about their mounts." Shyamal knew Akane was referring to the four Seraphina they had trained since they were twelve years old. Hala had just started training with Aysu, the young female Seraphina she had created a Rider's bond with. "Since they will not allow any other being to ride them, they are yours until they choose another rider. As such, they will follow you to Hogwarts so it would be best if we find lodging for them. I hear their Gamekeeper is also their Care of Magical Creatures teacher and is very good at his job."

King Shahriar smiled at them. "Akane and I will handle as much as we can but no doubt you will have to be there when Irfan comes to check over the documents. Do you still have questions?" The four heads shook. "I'm sure Hala needs to get back to her Rider training with Master Eachann. Shyamal, you can report back to Master

Miroslav. Cosmas and Damian, I hear the session with Master Pryderi is cancelled as he has been called to the Southern Borders to care for Owain as he has been wounded." Owain was the second eldest in the Siofra family, born five years after Akane.

All of them stood up, bowing to the King before leaving. The four siblings walked back to the stables to get their mounts.

"Five years and we're heading back to the wizarding world. I wonder if it's changed much." Damian said, crossing his arms behind his head. "I know for a fact the brooms must have gotten faster. The last model was the Aero 98 wasn't it?"

"We should get the latest broom on the market." Cosmas nodded, glancing at Shyamal.

A smirk appeared on their older brother's face. "We first have to make sure how much we have. We don't know how long we'll be at Hogwarts and I don't want to go broke. But I agree, if we have the money, we're buying the brooms."

"Boys and their Quidditch." Hala said, tucking a strand of her red hair behind her ear. "Can't even wait to leave the palace and you're already talking about the game."

Cosmas poked her in her side. "Don't even try it Hala. We know you like playing Quidditch with us."

The red hair girl batted the finger away. "I'm not obsessed with it like you are." She huffed when Cosmas poked her again. "Don't make me hex the living day lights out of you."

Shyamal rolled his eyes as he walked up to Aeolfwe who was standing there with the four Seraphinas. "I need to find out how you know when we're about to ride."

The Blood Elf winked at him. "You will never find out, young one."

Hala mounted her white Seraphina with a light blue fire-mane and tail. "I'll see you guys tonight." She dug her heels into the horse into a trot, guiding it south toward the meadows where the main force of the Seraphina Riders were. Shyamal turned to see Cosmas and

Damian already on their identical golden Seraphinas with black fire-manes.

"Are you coming with me to the training grounds?"

"Sure if just to watch Master Miroslav kick your bloody arse." Damian grinned as Shyamal got on his black Seraphina with a green fire-mane and tail.

Cosmas steered his mount to the West, leading the group. "Do you think they'll let us take the Elven armor they gave us? I wonder if they'll let us take a keg of their mead."

Shyamal blocked out his brothers' animated discussion of the things they'll be able to take to Hogwarts. Behind them, the sun was already riding the mountain tops, the blazing orb sending its warmth through the valley. But none of it touched the sudden chill inside of Shyamal.

They were heading back to the world that had turned on them. The Blood trees gave way to oak, maple, hornbeam, elm, birch, and pine. Maybe Hala was right and Edward did change from the superiority complex he had as the Boy-Who-Lived and became more of a human being. Unconsciously, Shyamal rubbed the back of his neck, knowing under his clothing lay the remnants of the first ten years of his life. Five years. Edward would be in his fifth year at Hogwarts.

The two golden Seraphinas snorted as they started galloping, the twins laughing and throwing barbs at each other as they raced to the training ground. Holding the reins tightly, Shyamal followed them, the thudding of the dozens hooves familiar in his ears as was the sight of the green fire-mane whipping in front of his face. As the path curved to follow one of the numerous tributaries feeding the Mures River, the thought of meeting his parents again flickered like a reviving butterfly in his stomach.

And just like a collector using ethyl acetate, he immediately crushed that feeling.

## Chapter Two- Arrival at Hogwarts

Albus Dumbledore stood on the steps of Hogwarts, watching the darkening Eastern sky for any signs of the new transfers from Durmstrang. It had been eighteen weeks since the disastrous end of the Triwizard tournament and the news of Voldemort's return to corporal form. Cedric Diggory, the Hufflepuff Champion, had been killed by Peter Pettigrew as they had wanted no witnesses for the return of Voldemort. After extensive studying on the Triwizard cup, they had been able to locate the location where Edward Potter and Diggory had been port-keyed to. There, they had recovered the corpse of the student but not before the Death Eaters had violated it.

The Ministry had explained that a rogue group that believed in Voldemort had planned it all and stated wild animals had gotten to the body before the Aurors did. But the Diggorys knew the truth.

Albus always had known that Cornelius Fudge would do anything to stay in office but to stoop to such levels had him pondering if the man was capable of fighting the army of the Dark Lord.

And that was not the only concern. After it had been made clear that Ivan Karkaroff was not returning back to Durmstrang, the Bulgarian School Board of Governors had appointed a Stephanos Irfan to the Headmaster position of the Institute. The man had once been a Bulgarian Auror with a prestigious career behind him and was legendary in Bulgaria. He had only met the man once and that was to discuss about the new transfers. The headmaster of the shadowy Institute was interesting to say the least.

"Albus, are you sure it is a sound idea to allow four unknown students to enroll in this year's classes?" Minerva McGonagall asked, her arms crossed over her chest. "They could be spies for You-Know-Who."

A small smile appeared on the Headmaster's face. "My dear, Headmaster Irfan vouches for the young students. They believe Hogwarts to be the only safe location when they heard the news and as a Headmaster, how could I reject sanctuary to four young children?"

The Potions Master huffed, his dark eyes narrowed in annoyance. "I do not see why you have them arrive at Hogwarts a week early before the semester, Albus. Surely, they could have stayed in one of the inns in Diagon Alley?"

The old man looked at the spy for the Order over his half moon spectacles. "I believe it better to have the students here where I can see how they act and react before allowing them to sit with the students, Severus. Also, Irfan informed me that they are Seraphina Riders and have formed a bond with their mounts."

Hagrid clapped his hands. "Seraphinas, did you say, Professor? They be particularly a beautiful beast. How many did they 'ave?"

"Four, Hagrid. The youngest child, Hala Suha, just bonded with hers and Irfan say her brother will be teaching her the last few skills as he has already passed his training with his own mount." Albus had only seen one Seraphina in his life time back when he was a young man of twenty nine.

The Seraphinas resembled the Friesian muggle horses with their powerful yet graceful bodies. Unlike the Friesian horses however, the Seraphinas stood between 18 and 21 hands. The most astonishing feature was their manes, tails, and feathers; instead of normal horse hair, tongues of colored flamed burned. When a Seraphina was exerting itself to its fullest extent, it was reported, small flickers of fire would also burst from their nostrils and flames would strike from their hooves. The sclera of the eyes of a Seraphina would be a light silver color, the irises taking on the color of their fire-manes. Though Seraphinas galloped and trotted like their nonmagical cousins on the ground, they did have the ability to travel through the air; something no wizard had been able to figure out. Such creatures would be a sight to behold in the wild; untouchable creatures of the mountains. The only race that had come to rely on them for transportation and other means was the Blood Elves who lived in the mountains of the Eastern Carpathians.

Which lead Albus to believe that not all of the truth was represented in the documents Headmaster Irfan had given him.

Dark specks appeared on the horizon, growing larger each second.

"It seems our new students have arrived." The group of professors watch in awe as the specks continued to grow until finally the saw the figures on the burning steeds. The group landed just beyond the edge of the Forbidden Forest, galloping then trotting toward the waiting group, the dark traveling cloaks billowing out behind them.

The leader who Albus believed to be the eldest rode a black Seraphina, beautiful emerald green flames burning from the usual spots. The riders on the outside of the last and smaller figure rode the identical golden Seraphinas, black flames blending in with their traveling cloaks. The sister rode between her twin brothers, no doubt for protection, on her white Seraphina, sapphire flames burning lightly. No doubt her mount was a youngling as it was slightly smaller than the rest. All four dismounted, removing their hoods and the scarves wrapped around their lower faces as they took the last steps with their mounts' reins in hand.

"Welcome to Hogwarts. I am Albus Dumbledore, Headmaster, and these are my colleagues who will be your teachers for your years here at Hogwarts. I'm sure your journey was fair?"

"It was, Headmaster. My name is Shyamal Suha." The older Suh quickly introduced his siblings to the professors before the black Seraphina snorted, tossing its head. "I'm sure you would like to continue this further but we have to settle in our mounts as they are not accustomed of being outside the Eastern Carpathian Mountains."

"Ah yes. Since there is some time before night falls, I'm sure it would be no trouble at all if you would eat an early dinner with us." Dumbledore said.

"Of course, Headmaster."

"Hagrid, will you help them settle their mounts and lead them to the Great hall afterward?"

"As ye wish, Professor." The group of teachers followed their Headmaster back into the school as the tall man walked down the stone steps to the group. "Those be fine looking beasts you got there. What be their names, if ye don't min' me askin'?" He commented as he led them down to his hut where he had built a large paddock behind his house.

"Thank you. My steed's name is Isocrates." Shyamal said, brushing his black bangs from his pure-black eyes.

One of the twins spoke up. "As for our steeds, we decided to use names similar to each other. My steed's name is Radomil and Cosmas used the name Radomir for his."

"I named mine Aysu which means 'moon water'."

Hagrid laughed at the expression on the young girl's face. "So ye must be Hala Suha. Professor Dumbledore said ye be new at ridin' a Seraphina."

"Yes, but Shyamal promised me he'll teach me as much as he can as he already passed his training." The group came upon Hagrid's house. "Is that where you live?"

"Yup. I'm the Gamekeeper and Keeper of Keys of Hogwarts and the Care for Magical Creatures Professor." Hagrid puffed out his chest slightly, still feeling proud he was a teacher. "The paddock be around the back. Professors McGonagall and Flitwick 'ave added spells to keep student out of the paddocks for the Seraphinas."

"Who are Professors McGonagall and Flitwick?"

"Professor McGonagall be the Transfiguration teacher 'ere at Hogwarts while Flitwick be the Charms teacher." Hagrid opened the gate for the kids, watching as they led the Seraphinas to the simple stables in the corner closest to Hagrid's hut. The kids were startled when a few house elves appeared to take their possession into the guest quarters in Hogwarts as the dormitories were being cleaned for the new semester. While the Suha siblings attended to their mounts, they talked with the Gamekeeper, gathering a bit of information from him.

They learned of a new professor being assigned to Hogwarts by the Ministry to watch over the running of the school; one Dolores Umbridge.

As they were hiking back up, Hagrid informed them that she was to be particularly assigned to watch over the Defense of Against the Dark Arts class which was taught by Sirius Black, one of James

Potter's best friends, the current Head Auror. Another tidbit was that the previous Muggle Studies professor had retired after the return of Lord Voldemort and was now going to be taught by Lily Potter under the name Professor Evans.

Shyamal compelled himself not to run to the castle wall and bang his head against it.

Luckily for him the conversation moved back to the Seraphinas. Damian was explaining the birthing process of the species as they entered the Great Hall. Just like they had been agreed upon, they all stopped to gape at the vaulted ceiling which was now a mix of red, orange, yellow, pink, purple, and blue as the sun set in the west. The orange-grey masses of the few clouds gently rolled in the imaginary breeze.

"That is so cool." Hala whispered as Shyamal took her hand who was making sure she made her way to the table.

"The ceiling was bewitched to take on the appearance of sky outside." Shyamal focused his gaze on the stern-looking woman sitting on the right hand side of the Headmaster.

"Durmstrang never had such features." Damian whispered to Shyamal as the food appeared, steaming dishes of mutton and rice with smaller dishes of steamed vegetables. Jugs full of pumpkin juice stood with a jug of wine for the professors.

"It would be quite astonishing if such a Dark school ever did." His eyes flicked toward a man dressed in black, his dark eyes fixed on Shyamal as he helped himself to the buttered corn.

"This is Professor Minerva McGonagall, our Transfiguration teacher, Head of Gryffindor House, and Deputy Headmistress and Professor Severus Snape, resident Potions Master and Head of Slytherin House." The two professors nodded as the rest of the teachers were introduced. The current Head of Hufflepuff was Professor Sprout who was also the Herbology teacher and Professor Flitwick was the Head of Ravenclaw. Dumbledore gave them a small smile. "Hogwarts prides itself on making the students at home as is humanly possible. Perhaps, after a few days, you will settle into the routines most students settle."

"Exactly what routine do you speak of, Headmaster? I'm not sure if there are differences in the curriculum here at Hogwarts."

"We carry the core classes of Transfiguration, Charms, Potions, Defense Against the Dark Arts, Astronomy, History of Magic, and Herbology with the optional classes of Arithmancy, Care for Magical Creatures, Divination, Ancient Runes, and Muggle Studies. I would like to speak with you over what classes you would like to take during your stay here at Hogwarts."

"As you wish, Headmaster."

"That's settled then." The Headmaster turned to his plate full of mutton and rice, a sprinkling of broccoli on the side.

Shyamal noticed that Professor McGonagall was still interested. The moment his eyes connected with hers, she spoke. "Mr. Suha, I am rather curious as to know why you choose to come to Hogwarts." From her tone, Shyamal knew that she was highly suspicious of them; he would have to be careful around her as not to rouse further suspicion.

"The news of Voldemort's possible return reached Durmstrang almost immediately. Despite that we had started our education at the Durmstrang Institute I have felt that the safest location in Europe was Hogwarts as everyone knows that he feared Headmaster Dumbledore." Shyamal answered quietly, eyes rising to meet the Headmaster's. "After what happened to our parents, I promised to keep my brothers and sister safe."

"Exactly where are your parents?" Professor Sprout asked, the motherly instinct coming out.

All of their eyes dropped to the table. "We don't know. One minute we were running then the next, we were waking up in a small house with an old lady whom we called Aunt Sylvia but her name was Sylvia Suha. She cared for us until she died about two years ago. With some help from the other students and the inheritance she left for us, we were able to continue our education and live in the small house."

"And the Seraphinas?"

"We became friends with a Blood Elf hunter and he petitioned his King to be able to train us as a Seraphina Rider. They've only been to one place outside of the Elven homeland and that would be Durmstrang. I wouldn't be surprised if they are late in settling down tonight before going to sleep." Damian said, scooping more mashed potatoes on his dish. Seeing the confusion on the professor's face, the twin pointed at the small scar he got from Radomil kicking him in the face once when he had been thirteen. "Cosmas doesn't have this."

His twin snorted. "I listened to Master Eachann when he said to not scare Radomil and Radomir after being shoed." Damian was going to retort when he saw the warning glare from Shyamal.

"Headmaster Dumbledore, before we left for Hogwarts, our previous Headmaster gave us the list of supplies you gave him for our education. We didn't have the time to go to Diagon Alley to purchase them as the ride was too long. With your permission, I would like to take my siblings to do our shopping before school starts."

Dumbledore nodded. "That would be appropriate."

"If I may, Albus, I have nothing scheduled tomorrow." McGonagall spoke up. "I also have some shopping to do myself so I can escort the new students to Diagon Alley."

She must be really suspicious of us. Shyamal thought.

"Would that be acceptable to you, Mr. Suha?"

"Yes, of course. I have no knowledge of the areas here so it would be greatly appreciated." Shyamal turned to McGonagall and started working out the plans for tomorrow. Soon the other teachers started conversing among themselves about work and the latest news outside of Hogwarts.

Meanwhile, Albus took the time to study their new arrivals.

Shyamal Suha was an average-sized boy with light brown hair except for the bangs which had been dyed black. His black eyes were hidden by oval eyeglasses, build was lean and wiry, no doubt from extensive physical training. The mannerism he had seen suggested Shyamal was a calm, wary boy who was in control of

himself at all times. Dumbledore saw his eyes take in details as if he was memorizing them for later. But the mannerism that struck the Headmaster the most was how the older boy made sure he knew where his siblings were and what they were doing. Something Albus was so familiar with.

The older twin, Damian Suha, was calmer than his younger twin but only be a slight degree. Anyone from outside the group would believe the two brown-haired boys with black bangs were the appointed protectors for their little sister as they tended to flank her at all times. Which indeed might be the case but Dumbledore knew that Shyamal was the protector of the group. But their growing bodies hinted they would be solidly built later in life. They seemed to echoes of another pair of identical twins, prankster who were entering their final year here at Hogwarts. The Headmaster was sure the number of pranks this year would increase. He could only hope the outcome would not be permanent.

The youngest sibling, Hala Suha was still small, barely reaching the height of her twin brothers' shoulders. Dark brown hair fell down around her shoulder, a small clasp holding it from falling into her face. Just like Shyamal, she was quiet but was aware of her surroundings but at certain times like when her brothers were annoying her, Albus glimpsed a formidable temper.

Just then Cosmas swiped a piece of dessert off Hala's plate, who swiftly turned to him, glaring. Words were whispered or rather hissed at which Cosmas quickly returned the piece.

"Cosmas, you know Hala doesn't like people touching her food. If you're really hungry, why don't you steal some off the plates?" Shyamal said, turning away from the conversation with McGonagall. The younger twin nodded before eating. "We'll be going to Diagon early in the morning so as not to catch the rush in the evening."

"Will we be going to a wand shop to see what's wrong with our wands?" Damian asked.

"Yes. Professor McGonagall says someone might have tampered with it or something. Aysu and the others will stay in the paddocks so we'll be travelling by floo." The siblings grimaced. "Finish up. I don't want to wake up late." A few minutes later, Dumbledore was

leading the group to their temporary quarters until the term started in six days.

They stopped before a painting with a young maiden petting a baby unicorn. "The quarters in side will house the four of you comfortably. The password is 'sugar quill'." The young curtsied as the portrait swung open. The siblings clambered inside to see a living room with a few smattering of chairs and a couple of tables. In the corner, a fire was roaring, spreading warmth through the room. Large tapestries covered the wall, images of a few popular magical beasts carefully stitched on them. Behind them, Dumbledore continued. "The hallway will lead to three bedrooms. I've guess that that the twins would like to have their own bedroom while you and your sister would like your own. I believe the house elves have already dropped off your belongings here."

"That's thoughtful, Headmaster. I'm sure it will be enough." The siblings smiled before heading to their rooms.

"Good night." Dumbledore left through the portrait, leaving Shyamal staring after him.

Shaking his head, he made sure Cosmas, Damian, and Hala were getting ready for bed. They redid the glamour charms before going under the covers.

Shyamal stared at the darkened ceiling of his room. Their mother was coming to Hogwarts to teach, something that he hadn't counted on. He should have known. Lily Potter wasn't the type of woman to stay at home and do nothing while her husband worked and child went to school. He knew that Lily Potter was knowledgeable in Potions and Muggle Studies while his father was a master at Defense Against the Dark Arts and Transfiguration. How would they handle being in a class with her?

The thing he was dreading was being in the same house as Edward. He had a feeling his older twin brother in Gryffindor. But the feeling inside him whispered the Suha siblings were going to end up there as well. Huffing in the darkness, Shyamal closed his eyes.

They would have to wait and see.

### Chapter Three- Diagon Alley Part 1

Professor Minerva McGonagall watched as the siblings entered her office, young Hala Suha barely walking on her own. Her little hands were clutching on Shyamal's cloak as she half walked to her desk. The twins on the other hand were bouncing on the soles of their feet, no doubt excited about going to the Alley for their school supplies.

"Have you ever travelled by floo?" She received a no. From the top of the mantle, she grabbed a box and opened it up, revealing a glittering powder inside. "Well, you will each take a pinch of floo powder and while you are throwing it into the fire, yell out the name 'Diagon Alley'. You will come out in the Leaky Cauldron which the pub that is the entrance to the Alley. As soon as you appear, move out of the way and stay close to the fire grate."

Shyamal moved forward first, eyes flickering to the roaring fire. Grabbing a pinch, he threw it into the fire, yelling out the words. McGonagall watched as the boy was sucked in, the flames turning back to their original color. The remaining Suha children gulped audibly. "Next."

The younger twin, Cosmas, walked forward. "Just say Diagon Alley and that's it?"

"Yes. Make sure the pronunciation is clear and precise."

"Okay." He stepped up to the grate. "Diagon Alley!" The emerald flames roared out, sucking in the next twin. The next two went in without handling.

"Hmm, perhaps, they'll be in Gryffindor." Minerva said to herself. Grabbing a pinch of floo, she followed them.

The moment Shyamal had stepped in, the roaring fire turned green, sucking him forward. It felt like he was being sucked down a pipe, flickering flames spiraling around him. Dozens of what looked like fireplaces flew past him with astonishing speed as he continued to spin down the pipe. After what seemed like an eternity, Shyamal fell out of a fireplace, stumbling into onto the floor. Just like he had been taught, he rolled to the side, rising to his feet as he opened his eyes.

The airy room was filled with tables, patrons talking, eating, and drinking. To his right, the bar stood, an old man cleaning a tankard

with a wet rag. A second later, Cosmas came sputtering out. Shyamal grabbed him and drew him to the side.

"Oh, what a ride." Cosmas sarcastically muttered as he rubbed his eyes. "I hate traveling by floo now." Damian came out, stumbling to the bar. Hala followed then Professor McGonagall. Shyamal was jealous as she lightly stepped out without a single misstep.

"You learn quickly. Now follow me." Without another word, she walked toward the back after giving a brief nod to the bartender. There, in the small garden, they came before a brick wall which Shyamal briefly remembered. McGonagall took out her wand and tapped a single stone three times. The brick wall immediately started shifting apart, rolling back to leave an archway. "Welcome to Diagon Alley."

"Wicked." Cosmas tapped at a brick as they passed on by. "Huh, I need to find out how it does that." He watched as the wall reasserted itself, the bricks folding back into its original position.

"Where would you like to go first, Mr. Suha?"

"Perhaps it would be prudent if I opened a bank account first at Gringotts and exchange the few gems I have left over from Sylvia's inheritance."

The professor lead them down the Alley toward the white marble building in the middle of the street, passing stalls, stores, and dozens of shoppers. Shyamal and Hala had to pull at their siblings when they caught sight of the Quidditch supply shop, the Firebolt still shown in the display case. Hala gave a sharp 'eep' when she saw the Magical Menagerie store and the animals in the window. Shyamal was still deciding on whether or not they'd each be getting an owl for post and such.

Passing through the doors into the inner sanctum of Gringotts, McGonagall lead them to a free goblin who was counting money. The goblin looked at them through the monocle, his hands swiping the final galleons off the top and into a drawer. "What service may I be of today for you, professor?"

"School business. These are Shyamal, Cosmas, Damian, and Hala Suha, transfers from Durmstrang. This is Ironclaw, the primary

accountant for Hogwarts. They would like to open a vault here at Gringotts and exchange gems into wizard money."

The goblin peeked up, the magnified eye now fixed on Shyamal. "What type of vault do you plan to open, Mr. Suha?"

"A low security vault will do for now. I would also like to be in complete control of the account with my siblings being the only ones beside myself to have access to the vault."

"And what about your parents?"

"Our parents died when we were young and I have been the guardian for my siblings." Shyamal's tone dictated that was the end of the matter.

The goblin grabbed a folder from somewhere behind the desk. Opening it, he used an ugly quill to write information on the first sheet. "A low security vault will carry the charge of seven sickles a month. There are no fees on transactions with other accounts unless it is from a high security account to yours. Only four people will be able to access the vault, with the eldest sibling in charge." Ironclaw pulled out something from the desk. It was bronze key that multiplied to four when the goblin tapped on it with a claw. He passed a dagger to the siblings. "A drop of your blood, please, on the head of the key." The four nicked their fingers and let a single drop on the keys. They glowed a bright blue color before turning back to bronze. The goblin tapped Shyamal's key again, the head forming a fancier look than the other keys which he handed to the teenager. "Your key is the master key. Now, for the exchange; what is it are you exchanging for wizard money?"

Shyamal pulled the bag of gems from where they had been tied to the back of his belt. "They are gems given to us by someone who had watched over us before she died."

Ironclaw pulled open the pouch and spread out the stones. His eyes widened in surprise, a greedy gleam entering them. "I can trade them all for 750,000 galleons."

"1 million galleons." Shyamal stated, eyes flashing in determination.

"800,000."

"1 million or I will be attending to my business in another bank." Shyamal stated firmly, already starting to sweep the gems back into the pouch.

The goblin laid a rough hand on the pouch. "1 million galleons it is then." The gems were swept into the bag then disappeared into the goblin's desk. He tapped the folder which immediately copied itself on another folder. "This is your copy. The original will be kept in the Records here at Gringotts. Vault 3158 will be your vault."

"I would also like to visit my personal vault as well, Ironclaw." Professor McGonagall stated.

The goblin nodded as he snapped his fingers, a second goblin appearing at next to McGonagall. "Griphook, lead our customers to Vault 185 for the professor and Vault 3158 for Mr. Suha. They have just opened a vault."

"Follow me." Griphook lead them down to the door which opened out into what looked like a loading dock. As the goblin stepped up, a cart sped into the room stopping right before them all. The group climbed in and sped off just as Shyamal entered it. The cart sped on and stopped a minute later at a large door. Shyamal and his siblings stayed in the cart with Griphook as McGonagall attended to the vault and came back tying a pouch to her belt.

A rickety ride later, the cart stopped before a second vault with bronze doors. "Vault 3158." Griphook walked up to the doors and held out a clawed hand. "Keys." Taking them, he slid a finger down the middle of the door, revealing the keyhole. Whispering a word in the goblin language, he inserted the keys one by one into the vault. They glowed blue before fading to white. "Your blood has been transferred to the wall itself which will now recognize you and any goblin working for Gringotts." He handed the keys back as the doors opened. Inside was a large pile of gold coins.

Shyamal walked up to the pile and scooped them into his pouch until it was full. Taking out three smaller pouches he did the same. Tying the bigger one to his belt, he handed the smaller pouches to his siblings. "Make sure you take care of it. I don't want to be coming back here every few days because you're on a spending binge."

"We would never do such a thing." Cosmas stated innocently. Shyamal snorted as the group headed back to the cart. Ten minutes later they were walking out of the bank.

Professor McGonagall looked at them. "Perhaps it would be prudent if we went to Ollivander's to see what is wrong with your wands." Receiving a nod, Minerva led the group into the dusty old shop, her sharp eyes immediately seeing the shop owner in the gloom, standing among the hundreds of wand boxes. The students followed her in, stepping over discarded boxes and old newspaper.

"Minerva McGonagall, ah yes, I remember you. 17 inches, ivy, griffin feather core; a very good wand for advanced Transfiguration." The old man ranted off as he approached the group, his eyes going over the group.

"Mr. Ollivander. These students are requesting to see you about the wands they purchased in a town in Romania. Last night at dinner, they confessed their wands do not fully comply with their wishes."

One of Ollivander's eyebrows rose. "Curious, extremely curious, perhaps you have been defeated by another student?" The four heads shook in answer to his question, their eyes on the wand maker. A calloused finger pointed at Shyamal. "Let me see you. Summon the vase."

Giving a glance at his siblings, Shyamal waved his wand, summoning the broken and dusty vase in the soar window. Nothing happened. He tried again, forcing his will on the wand.

Ollivander was watching him with a critical eye. "I believe the wand refuses you as its master. Perhaps it will be the same with all of you if you are all having the same problems. Tell me of the store in Romania where you bought your wands."

"It wasn't a store. A wand maker was traveling through our town before school started for me. Since the closest store was miles away and the journey tiring for our caretaker, we decided to purchase our wands off him. He just immediately said that our wands had chosen us when it gave some feeble sparks." Shyamal glanced at McGonagall. "Now that I think about it, he left pretty quickly after that."

The wand maker snorted in disgust. "Absolutely revolting, no doubt the wands he sold you were stolen and he was trying to get rid of them. Since you never defeated the previous owner, they will not obey your commands. You four will have to purchase new wands."

"What about the people who got theirs stolen? Will you be able to find them?" Hala spoke up.

"Finding the wizard or witch who owns the wand will be hard. Quite a few wands are stolen every year. But I will no doubt alert the Ministry who will contact their familiars in the Romanian Ministry." Ollivander took their stolen wands, never knowing the children before him had stolen the wands for their cover story. Tucking them in a black box that he hid under the table, he turned to the group. "Now for your wands."

Shyamal stepped up, waving the first wand Ollivander gave him; an oak wand, twelve and a half inches, with a dragon heartstring as its core. The vase that had been chosen before broke into thousands of ceramic pieces. Ollivander immediately took the wand back, shoving another in Shyamal's hand. Boxes flew from the shelves. Wand after wand was tried but the same results were given. "Ah, difficult customer you are going to be." The wand maker walked to the back, eyes roaming the untidy rows of boxes.

Cosmas leaned toward his twin. "Isn't me or is the old coot getting more excited the more wands Shyamal tries."

"Nah, he's really getting hyper."

Finally Ollivander came back to them, holding a particular box reverently. "This here wand, Mr. Suha is holly, phoenix feather core, eleven inches."

The moment the holly wand touched his fingers, he could feel the vibrations of the wand as it bonded to him. Warmth spread up through his body, a flush breaking out on his cheek, his arm raising. Giving it a wave, gold and red sparks flew out the end, the colors reflecting in Shyamal's eyes.

"It seems the wand has chosen you, Mr. Suha." A slight look of confusion covered his face. "The most curious thing is that the wand you hold in your hand is the brother of another wand." Everyone

turned to the wand maker, wondering where he was going with this. "You see, Mr. Suha, that wand's brother belonged to He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named."

The professor's head spun toward him, eyes narrowing behind her square eyeglasses. He felt his siblings bunching up behind him. "To the Dark Lord?" He asked, a unsettling weight sinking into his stomach.

Ollivander rubbed his chin. "Yes. He was a great wizard, performing great feats of magic. Terrible, yes, but nonetheless great." The old man leaned toward Shyamal. "Perhaps you are destined for great things as well." A chill went up Shyamal's spine as he gazed into aged eyes. He felt like the wand maker knew his identity, feeling as if the man was looking into his very soul.

The feeling was broken when Ollivander stood up, clapping his hands as his gaze settled on the twins. "Now, for you young ones."

It was an hour later and 25 galleons lighter when the group left. Shyamal had bought them wand holster that fitted over their forearms. McGonagall stopped them before Florean Fortescue's Ice Cream Parlour.

"I did not count on the shopping for taking so long and I have to work on the schedule for this year's classes which I must have done before the start of the term. It would be better if we split up and shop separately to get done." The professor looked at her watch. "We will meet back here in three hours from now. That should be enough to get our shopping done."

"Of course, I'm sure I can ask for directions if we get lost." The two groups parted ways. Shyamal took out his list for the next year and saw the greatest amount of items from the book. "We should get the books first." As they headed toward their next destination, Hala looked over her new possession.

"I can't believe I have my own wand; nine and three-quarter inches, hazel with a heartstring from a Hungarian Horntail." Hala looked up at her brothers. "I still can't believe you almost got the same wand type."

Cosmas rolled his eyes. "Almost being the operative word. We both may have gotten reed wands that are ten and a half inches but the cores are different. Mine's a phoenix feather while Damian's is a sliver of a horn of a unicorn."

"Just tells us exactly who is more mischievous of the two then? Don't unicorns mean innocence?" Damian teased.

"I think it reflects more of the fact that both of you have been trained in the healing arts." Shyamal noted. "I mean both are used in various healing potions."

"Maybe Hala's came from the fact her temper is one not to be messed with- OW!" Cosmas whined as he jumped on one foot as the other had been stomped on by Hala.

Damian smiled. "Serves you right." His twin just huffed as they entered the bookstore. The four split up after taking a basket.

Shyamal looked at his list. "It looks like the lists are about the same. I'll get the books for Defense, Arithmancy, and Magical Creatures. Damian, you get the books for Charms, Ancient Runes, and Transfiguration. Cosmas, the books for Potions and Herbology are yours. Hala, books for History of Magic and Astronomy. Meet back near the counter." Shyamal watched as his siblings sped off to their assigned categories, Damian and Cosmas heading up to the second story for theirs and Hala to the left. Going to the right, Shyamal never saw the black-haired boy entering the shop or the red heads heading straight for the counter.

Hala looked at her list as she quickly trotted down the aisles of the bookstore, trying to see what book she needed for second years. She was so engrossed in her shopping that she didn't see the large mass in front of her until she had walked into it. Falling on her rear, she looked up as the boy turned to her, hazel eyes fixed on her with a glare.

"Watch where you're going, girl."

Anger immediately sparked up in Hala. "Well, I was going to say I was sorry but obviously a pompous git like you doesn't deserve to hear it." She got up and dusted off her robes.

The boy turned to her fully, eyes glaring even harder under the black messy hair. "Watch how you speak to your superiors. I'm the Boy Who Lived-

"More like the Boy Whose Head is too Big to Fit in a Door." Two red heads came up beside Hala, a boy and a girl who were no doubt siblings. It had been the boy who had spoken. "I'm surprised you made it into the store with your parents performing the Reducing Charm on your head before entering."

The first boy snorted in disgust. "Like you have anything to say to me, Weasley. Hand-me down robes, second hand books, barely able to rub two knuts together, I'm surprised you're even here."

The Weasley girl stepped forward into the boy's face. "You're disgusting, Potter. You act just like the Malfoy family and you're supposed to be a leader of light when you grow up."

"What's going on here?" A Flourish and Blotts employee entered the aisle, her eyes taking in the scene before her. "Mr. Potter, I'm sure the manager spoke with your parents after the debacle last year. One misstep and you will no longer be allowed to shop here in person." The boy huffed and walked away. The employee turned to the Weasleys and Hala. "I'm sure you know what to do but I'm still forced to warn you. Stay away from the Potters."

"We would have but he was starting to pick on another customer." The Weasley boy pointed at Hala.

Seeing the employee's stare, Hala explained. "I accidentally bumped into him and he started to rant."

"Yes, well, ever since that day in 1981, the Potters took a turn for the worst. Just please be careful." The employee walked away.

"So that was Edward Potter, the Boy Who Lived? My name is Hala Suha. I'm here with my brothers."

"Yup, my name is Ron Weasley and this is my sister Ginny." Ron pointed a finger at the letter in Hala's hand. "Going to Hogwarts?"

"Yes. We just recently transferred to the school from Durmstrang. My older brother felt it was more comfortable and safe if the rumors

about Voldemort are true." Hala pulled a book from the shelves, and after making sure it was the right one, placed it into her basket. "What year are you in?"

"Ron is entering his fifth and I'm entering into my fourth year. We have two more brothers who are entering their final year." Ginny lead them to the front of the store where a group of red heads was standing, talking to the employee behind the counter. "That's our parents, Molly and Arthur Weasley. The twins are George and Fred."

"Oh, two of my brothers are identical twins too."

"There you are, dearies. We're just about to buy your school books." Mrs. Weasley said, handing the cashier a small amount of galleons, some sickles, and a couple of knuts. "Have you made a friend, Ronald?"

The boy blushed but answered. "Yes. It seems she's transferred to Hogwarts this year."

"Hala!" Shyamal and the Suha twins came up behind her, carrying their assigned books. Mrs. Weasley quickly shrunk her purchases and handed them to her children to allow the new arrivals to place their books on the counter. "Thank you, ma'am. Hala, where have you been?"

"I was looking for the last of my assigned books when I stumbled into a git. Shyamal, Cosmas, Damian, this is Ron, Ginny, George, uh, Fred, and their parents, Mr. and Mrs. Weasley. These are my older brothers."

"Transfers? From what school?"

"Durmstrang. We felt Hogwarts was a safer school with the rumors going around." Shyamal quickly paid the cashier.

"If you would like, you can us. We just started our shopping." Ron asked, his pleading eyes going to his parents.

Shyamal shifted, sensing Hala was pleading at him with her eyes. "We're here with Professor McGonagall. She was escorting us but the shopping was taking a bit longer than we expected so we

decided to split and meet back at the Ice Cream Parlour in about 2 and half hours time."

"Well, now. We better be off if you are to make it on time." Mrs. Weasley stated, hustling her children out the door. Shyamal was grateful that she didn't hustle his siblings too. Already, Hala was talking with Ginny.

Suddenly Cosmas was choking, his body sprouting bright yellow feathers. Shyamal's eyes narrowed on the Weasley twins whose grinning faces immediately telling the elder Suha sibling who was at fault.

"Fred! You better have not given the boy a Canary Cream!" Came Mrs. Weasley's voice.

"Sorry, mum. We were just sharing some treats we had with us. We didn't mean to give him one."

George spoke up. "It will wear off soon." The words had barely left his mouth when Cosmas gave a chirp, a second later the feathers shedding in clumps. "See no harm done."

Cosmas flicked off a feather that had fallen on his shoulder. "What was that? It was wicked!"

"It's been some pranks and jokes we've been working on." Fred explained. "This particular treat turns the consumer into a canary for a short time. We've been trying to find a way on how to prolong the effect but no luck so far."

"Fred! George! No more or you both will be regretting it!" Mrs. Weasley said, bearing down upon her sons. "I have better not see a Canary Cream or a Fake Wand or anything of the sort for the rest of the day." She disappeared into the Slug and Jiggers Apothecary shop, the group following her.

The twins gulped. "Sure, mom."

"So you two are pranksters?" Damian asked.

"Of course we are!"

Ron leaned toward Shyamal. "Don't get them started. Ever since they beat Edward Potter and his gang of cronies in the Prank War of '91, they've been insufferable about their titles."

"What happened?"

"You see, Edward Potter is the son of James and Lily Potter. The bloke is one of the Marauders who were very infamous pranksters back in their days at Hogwarts. The group would come up with loads of pranks that were hilarious but also on the borderline of danger. The git thought he was entitled to the King of Pranks when he came to Hogwarts, challenged my brothers the first week. By the first weekend, no one was taking him seriously. Some even think that he shouldn't even call himself a Marauder as his jokes were really poor in taste." Ron said.

Shyamal noticed Cosmas and Damian had bunched up with George and Fred, all four of them huddled together. "Well it seems our brothers have bonded."

"Then I hope Hogwarts is prepared for this year." Ron said, giving his list one last look. "I think that's all the ingredients I need for this year, just had to stock up on the monkshood."

"We have to buy the stuff you guys got in the first year except the books, ingredients, etc, have to be for the year we're starting in." Shyamal said, making sure he had one Grade 5 pack, two Grade 4 packs, and one Grade 2 pack on the counter. "That should last until the end of the year right?"

"Yeah, if you really have to, you can stock up on the Hogsmeade visits." Ron said, gathering his purchases in his hands. "Once I turn 17, I won't have to have to wait for mum to shrink everything." Hala giggled, knowing that Shyamal already could due to his status as their guardian.

The four pranksters came up, carrying some suspicious supplies. Shyamal rolled his eyes. "I'm not going to ask but don't get into trouble. I've already bought the ingredients for all four of us. Where's Hala?"

"We promise we'll do our doggone hardest not to get caught." Cosmas winked at him. "Back near the front with Ginny. They're awing over some unicorn horns."

Shyamal nodded before turning back to Ron. He had barely left the odorous shop when he stopped, Damian bumping into his back as he caught sight of the group leaving the Quidditch supply shop, the people excruciating familiar.

The Marauders and the Potters.

## Chapter Four- Diagon Alley Part 2

Hala caught sight of the group, sending Edward a glare as she moved closer to Shyamal. The boy sent her one back along with a snarl that curved his mouth as he walked into the Quality Quidditch Supplies with his parents, Remus, and Sirius. Five years had changed them very little except in Remus' case; he had a little more grey in his light brown hair. James and Sirius had a few more wrinkles in their face, no doubt from their jobs as Aurors. Out of the four adults, Lily had changed the least. Still lively and glowing as she took care of her now only child.

"Can I go over there and give him one?" Cosmas asked as they were steered to Madam Malkin's Robes for All Occasions which was right next door, remembering all the times when they had been small.

Shyamal shook his head. "I don't want any trouble. Right now, he's protected by them and we might not even be allowed to go to Hogwarts if Potter has his way. You can prank him all you want when we go there." He didn't want to cause any trouble that would have unwanted attention falling on them.

Cosmas clapped his hands together, sharing a grin with Damian. "That's all good then. George and Fred told us that they do it all the time to him."

The group chatted animatedly as they were fitted with the standard Hogwarts robes. The whole time, Shyamal tried not to grin at the plans the four teens were creating to pull on Edward. But he failed when he grinned at the thought of them successfully pulling off the bit where they would charm his broom to carrying a banner. The words on the banner was as of yet, undetermined.

As they were leaving, Shyamal asked them a question. "Potter went into the Quidditch shop. Is he on one of the house teams?" The Weasleys groaned at this which made the Suhas wonder if he was really that bad. That's when they had found out that Edward was also the Gryffindor seeker. Compared to the other Gryffindors who had tried out, he was the best of them but not the best out of the four teams.

The Hogwarts students ranked him at 3rd place in skill with Draco Malfoy below him. The only reason Draco was able to steadily beat him was the fact that he had the Nimbus 2000 while Draco had a Nimbus 2001 which was slightly faster. The Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff seekers were better despite having to use the older brooms as they made up in pure skill and thus were the only teams racing for the Quidditch cup.

No one at Hogwarts had Firebolts.

At this point, a mischievous gleam entered Hala and Cosmas' eyes. That's when the questions started coming his way. They wanted Shyamal to buy all of them a Firebolt. Shyamal did have to admit it was tempting. Even though they had been isolated from the Wizarding world for five years, the first years of their lives had been with their parents. During that time, Shyamal had seen they had talent and they had all practiced with the brooms at Potter Manor in the dead of night when everyone else was sleeping. The four of them flying in the dead of night under the full moon was spectacular were one of the few happy times they had of the manor.

"Please, Shyamal, pretty please?" Hala begged as they went from the clothing store to the Eeylops Owl Emporium. The Weasleys went to the counter to get food for their pets as they already had owls.

Shyamal pretended not to hear, continuing to browse the dozens of owls standing on the perches on the adorning the walls.

"Four Firebolts, bro, we can make up half a team." Cosmas said a dreamy look on his face as he looked over the variety of Masked Owls in the shop. "I'm sure even Damian would want to get on the team."

"We don't even know how much they cost. It must surely be expensive as the sign did say to 'ask an employee for price'." Shyamal stated, "Do you want that owl, Hala? It's looking at you." He sighed in relief when her attention diverted to the Lesser Sooty Owl. She squealed in delight as the owl flew down to land on her outstretched arm.

"What about you, Shyamal? Are you going to get an owl?" Damian was petting the owl he had chosen, a Eurasian Eagle Owl. His brother was holding a Masked Owl, petting the reddish-brown

feathers on its back. "I can't believe he was able to get on the Gryffindor Quidditch team. I guess the other trying seekers were bad as Edward had hardly any good skill in whatever position except for beater."

"I don't know. None of them really catch my eye." The Weasleys came to Shyamal, telling him that they'd meet the four of them at the Parlour when they finished their purchases. It wouldn't take long as the Suhas just need their Astronomy stuff and the last items for Potions.

"I think I'm going to name mine Akane after you know who." Cosmas said, smiling when his owl hooted in reply. "Both of them are beautiful."

"Since I can't think of any other name, I think I'm going to call you Vega, after the eagle constellation." The newly named owl turned her great yellow eyes on Damian, hooting once, before turning away to stare up in the corner of the Emporium. "Shyamal, why don't you think of getting a cat or a rat?"

"What the hell am I going to do with one of those?" Shyamal stated, looking away from the tawny owls sitting on the lower perches. He noticed how Vega was staring at the same exact spot for the last minutes she had been standing on Damian's shoulder. In fact, if he thought about it, she looked sad. "What's wrong with your bird?" Vega turned to Shyamal, giving a sharp chirp before turning back on him.

"Vega is friends with another owl here, Mister." Said the old man behind the counter. "She's hiding in the dark corner over there ever since her previous owner left her here."

"What happened?" Hala asked as she tightening her hands around the cage she had bought for her owl.

The man shrugged. "The Potters came here in their son's first year and bought the snowy owl but about a week later they returned her back. They said it didn't live up to their standards but I noticed the poor animal seemed to be abused emotionally if not physically. Ever since then, the poor gal has been sitting up there."

Stupid Edward. He never did care for animals. Shyamal thought. He headed over to the dark corner and sure enough, standing on the perch behind a large cage was a snowy owl, her dull amber eyes watching him carefully. Now what do I say to an owl that's been abused? Might as well as give it a try. "Here, girl, I'm not going to hurt you." Shyamal extended his arm out slowly, placing it at her feet. She didn't step on it. "Come on, girl. I'm not going to hurt you." He repeated softly, edging his arm against her feet. After bending down to nip at his arm in warning, she stepped on his arm, his thick tunic shirt protecting him enough from her talons. "That's it. That's a nice girl." He slowly petted his hand down her white back, making sure his movements were nice and slow. The owl nibbled his fingers, her amber eyes watching him. "Does she have a name?"

The old man rubbed his chin. "Perhaps but the whole time the Potters talked about her, it was owl or it."

Hala looked at the Snowy Owl, her somber eyes fixed on the bird. "How about Hedwig?"

Shyamal chuckled as the owl gave a small chirp. "I think Hedwig it is." He rubbed the area right above the eyes, his heart melting a bit as she closed her eyes. "How much for the lot?"

"21 galleons, 4 sickles, and one Knut, sir."

Damian counted out the money from Shyamal's pouch, handing it to the man. Grabbing the cages, the four carefully placed their new pets into them, Shyamal being extra careful with his. Giving one last pet, he closed the cage.

"Where off to now?" Damian asked.

"Potage's Cauldron Shop and then the Telescope Shop. After that we're done."

They bought their glass phials, brass scales, and size 2 pewter cauldrons even though Hala wanted a set of crystal phials for potions but Shyamal told her no. At the telescope shop, they bought the last item on their Hogwarts list which was the small telescope needed for their Astronomy class. Carrying everything back to the Parlour, they sighted the Weasleys in the front of the shop sitting at two tables pushed together.

Pretending to have forgotten something, Shyamal went back down the Alley and slipped into the Quidditch shop. A few minutes, he was leaving, hoping that his present for his siblings would not go to their head. Sitting down, he started on the bowl of cocoa frogs that his sister had gotten him.

Professor Dumbledore gazed at his headmistress, deep in thought about the news she had given him. "Ollivander stated that Shyamal's wand is the brother to Tom's wand?"

"Yes, he did. It was the holly wand carrying a phoenix feather core."

Ever since the attack on the Potters in 1981, Albus had firmly believed that the second wand that carried a feather from Fawkes would go to Edward Potter as he had been marked by Tom when he was an infant of fifteen months. How shocking it had been when Ollivander told him that he instead had gotten a holly wand, eleven inches, with a dragon heart string core from a Chinese Fireball. A wand very suited to dueling, Ollivander had ensured him. Now to have that wand in the hands of a transfer from Durmstrang was unsettling to the Hogwarts headmaster. The boy was an unknown chess piece on a very complex and shadowed chessboard.

"What would you have me do, Albus? He is barely fifteen years old."

"Tom was only a child of fourteen when he started torturing the children at his orphanage with wandless magic." Albus replied back, standing up to pace behind his desk. "What have you seen about the boy during your brief time with him?"

"Just like what I thought about last night. He's very protective of his siblings as if he has taken the role of the father with them." Albus could sympathize with that. After the death of his parents, he had taken up the role of caretaker for his sister who had been ravaged by the Muggles in their village. It had been the burden of the responsibility that led to the untimely death of his sister. Would the weight break the spirit in the boy? Albus had buckled under the weight for one child but Shyamal Suha had to take care of three and had been for some time now. Professor McGonagall continued. "I wouldn't be surprised if the twins went into Gryffindor as they do have an aura of recklessness though the elder Suha has kept a tight rein on them. As for the younger Suha, I believe she might be sorted

into Hufflepuff. As for Shyamal, I cannot really say on what House he will be sorted into."

"I always believed we sorted too early in placing the students into one of the four Houses. Perhaps it would be idle if we just keep an eye on them. I have a feeling if we push Mr. Suha too far, he will immediately push back, dangerously if his siblings are in any danger."

"Don't think he'll be a threat to Potter?"

"At this point in time, Minerva, I will have to say no but I fear Alastor's saying comes to mind quite clearly. Once you return, send them up to me as I have to talk with them about their schooling as well as a few things that are personal matters."

"Constant vigilance." She gathered her robes as she stood. "I must be returning now. I have to buy the supplies I need otherwise they will be suspicious of me. I will see you soon, Albus." She went to the fireplace and disappeared in a flash of green flame.

The headmaster sighed, leaning back in his chair, pondering about this new turn in recent events. Was it another sign that Edward Potter was not the Boy Who Lived? Had he been wrong those long years ago when he proclaimed Edward to be the Chosen One?

Dumbledore steeped his fingers, elbows on the arm rests as he went over the evidence that had been available at the time. Both of the twins had been carrying wounds after the attack, both quite similar except Edward's was exactly in the middle of his forehead while Harry's had been just off center. Both of the children had been crying at the explosion though Edward's was louder than that of his twin's. Edward had been in front of Harry as if he was trying to protect his younger brother as he had been born first by 3 minutes. Harry on the other hand had been born exactly on August 1st at 12 am.

But what if the midwife healer had been wrong?

Seconds may not have matter to them but what if Harry had been born in those last few moments of July 31st, right before the clock struck 12?

And if he had, what would that mean to the Wizarding World?

Standing up, Dumbledore walked to the window that overlooked the Hogwarts grounds, his eyes focused on the train station on the other side of Black Lake. When the boys had been ten years old, the Death Eaters had attacked on the full moon after their tenth birthday party to utilize the werewolves at their peak. Edward Potter had claimed Harry had let them in through the wards which lead to the deaths of Daniel and Alexander Potter, the second pair of twins Lily had given birth to on November 1st, a few hours after the attack on her older twins. The youngest Potter had disappeared also that night; the Ministry and the Potters presumed Evangeline Potter dead after two years.

If he had indeed chosen wrong, then it would mean that Harry Potter, the Boy Who Lived, was aligned with Voldemort.

Behind him, Fawkes shook his head, giving a chirp as he flashed away.

"So to be in Slytherin, you have to be ambitious and cunning?" Damian asked the Weasleys.

"Well, according to the Sorting Hat but mostly Dark Wizards go to that House. You Know Who was a member back in his day." George whispered darkly.

Shyamal glanced over at them from his cup of ice cream. "What's wrong with being a Slytherin? I think it has to do with personal choice than what house you're in. Before Voldemort, Slytherin was known for its students being ambitious and cunning. Quite a few Ministers were from Slytherin. I always did say that politicians had to be to work their way up in the ranks."

Ron snorted in disgust. "Mate, that House is Dark through and through. Once you're a Slytherin, you're damned for life."

"I think he's right, Ron." Ginny moved a strand of red hair out of her face. "I was reading in Hogwarts: A History, that after You Know Who rose to power, his influence on his old House led him to recruit more supporters from there. I just never really thought about it."

Shyamal leaned in closer, motioning them to move closer. "Plus, where we live, there's a library that's even older than Hogwarts herself and they keep records that haven't been tampered with. I believe that story about Salazar Slytherin was corrupted by his own line."

"WHAT?" The Weasley children yelled.

"I really don't know the story as I was never really interested in it so I don't know all the details."

"I read it and if you did, you'd agree with me that it's—" Cosmas slurped up some more of his melted ice cream. "-that it's kind of sad what happened to the poor bloke if you read the real story. The reason why Slytherin left Hogwarts was because he and Godric Gryffindor were having a really nasty spat about how to teach to muggle-borns about the magical community. Salazar took offence to his teachings and left with his new wife. They moved to a muggle community that had recently turned Christian on the edges of the coast and had I think three kids, the elder being a squib. After like some eight years, the community found out that Slytherin's wife was a witch and they burned her at the stake. The elder was out with his dad but the two younger ones were able to escape the witch hunt and saw their mom being burned to death. They came back and Slytherin lost it, killing almost the entire community. Ashamed of what he had done, he sent the boys to Godric and the other Founders, saying he was a threat to his boys' lives and killed himself. His two younger sons started hating Muggles for their racist views while the elder was cast out by them for being too muggle like. The only daughter of Cadmus Peverell married the second oldest son and generations later, Voldemort is born. Voila, bloke is hateful of anything muggle."

The tables were silent. Damian pinched himself. "I can't believe you actually read a history book. The entire magical community is going to die after Voldemort turns good. OW!" Damian rubbed the spot where his brother had punched him.

"But I'm sure Gryffindor and the other two Founders would have never allowed that history to be distorted by Salazar's own children." Fred started.

Shyamal sighed. "History is written by the victors. With the rise of Christianity, the hatred of muggles spread throughout the magical community at the time. Salazar was pretty popular back then but then the reversal of popular opinion a few hundred years later changed all that so now Salazar looks like an evil tyrant."

"It's difficult to change the view of a historical person when his descendant is such an arrogant and tyrannical bloke himself." Damian added. The Weasleys were silent, digesting this new information. "Well, I was thinking of being in Ravenclaw where the most intelligent witches dwell."

"The smartest witch in our year is in Gryffindor. I know her somewhat. Her name is Hermione Granger and she's the Gryffindor prefect." Ron said proudly. "You would have met her today but she's on a trip somewhere in the Muggle world and won't be back until two more days. You can meet her when we're at Hogwarts."

Fred and George started laughing. "The reason why you know her is the fact is that you have a crush on her even though she's your only friend."

The tips of Ron's ears reddened. "I do not!"

"Do too!" Ginny laughed as Ron sent her a glare.

Shyamal gave a chuckle before catching sight of the approaching professor. "It seems McGonagall is here." The Suha siblings started gathering their bags, thanking the Weasleys for the talk and time.

"Molly, Arthur." Minerva stated as she walked up to the group. "I see you met our new transfers."

"Ah, yes. They are well behaved teenagers, more what I can say for the Potters' child." Molly said, beaming at Hala. "It seems they ran into him in Flourish and Blotts."

Professor McGonagall turned to Shyamal with an eyebrow raised. "I am sure there wasn't any trouble between the two of you."

Hala shook her head. "We just traded words before we parted ways. Shyamal wasn't even there but other than that, our trip here was fun!"

"Have you purchased everything?"

"Yes, professor. We should be good for the year."

"Good then. We shall be taking our leave now. We shall see you all at Hogwarts next week." The twins traded knowing grins, already having planned the first prank of the year.

Hearing a knock on his office door, the headmaster called out for the guest or guest to enter. Dumbledore looked up to see the Suha children standing there. "Ah, come in. Did you find your trip to Diagon Alley exciting?" He received nods all around. "Lemon drop?"

"No but thank you sir." Shyamal said.

"As I said last night, we would need to go over your academic classes and elective classes. I see that all of your grades are well above average for your classes so there are no worries there. Headmaster Irfan has noted on your brothers' files that they are werewolves. Is that correct?"

"Yes, sir."

"As you know, anyone who is a werewolf is highly suspected to be dangerous to the community and to the public. However, I do not share such thoughts with the Ministry. In fact, not so long ago, we had a student here who was a werewolf himself. We still have the location where he went to for his transformations. We can have Flitwick and McGonagall check over to see if it is still in acceptable condition."

"Sir, not to be rude but I believe that won't be a problem. Unlike the Ministry here, the Bulgarian Ministry actually works with teachers from the East to help werewolves control their animal side. It isn't a cure outright but with help and time, they can learn how to actually control their transformations. Granted they still have to change during the full moon but they can control it fully. My brothers have learned and are no longer a threat. It was a necessity as the Wolfsbane potion is rare in Bulgaria."

Dumbledore looked over his glasses. "You have learned to control your transformations?" Cosmas and Damian both nodded. "Can you show me?"

"Shyamal?"

"Go ahead but be careful."

The twins stood up and went to stand before the door. Breathing out, the boys started to change. The next second, two feral wolves stood where the two boys had been. Their snouts were longer and narrower than a normal wolf, their canines peeking underneath their upper lip. Instead of round, they were slit-like, similar to a snake's, thin and long. Their tufted tails were spikier than a normal wolf which was bushy. Their fur was a dark brown almost black but not quite except for the streaks of black running on their backs and tail. As they shifted slightly, the light in the room caught the silver highlights in the hair, giving the fur a slight silver glow. After a few seconds, the twins shifted back, giving Shyamal and Hala small grins.

Dumbledore clapped, eyes twinkling in surprise and awe. "Marvelous. I have never seen a werewolf that has been able to take control of their transformations. When were you exactly bitten?"

"On the night we lost our parents. The werewolves attacked Cosmas and Damian first. It was a full moon so they slipped into the fever caused by the parasite. I didn't know about werewolves much at the time so I grabbed them both and made Hala run with me as our parents dealt with the pack. That was when we were suddenly teleported to Sylvia. She saw the bites and threw Cosmas and Damian into a room just as they came out of their fever, transforming into werewolf cubs. We never heard from our parents again." Shyamal explained.

"If they have never searched for you then it stands to reason that they were perhaps killed in the werewolf attack." Dumbledore leaned forward, thinking. "As you know, the standard age of adult wizards here in Britain is 17 but Irfan informs here that you are recognized by the Bulgarian Ministry as an emancipated adult in your homeland. As such, that recognition has been carried here which means we will recognize you as adult and the guardian of your siblings. The payment that has gone to Durmstrang for the rest of your years has been transferred here and considering the payment for the years is

less than those of Durmstrang, the money will be returned to you." Dumbledore slid a piece of parchment toward Shyamal, containing the copy of the transaction.

Shyamal stared at the slip of parchment the Headmaster had given him. "I'm sure I'll keep this safe if there's ever a time we decide to return to Durmstrang."

"That would be prudent." Dumbledore opened their files. "For the last matter, what classes will you three be taking? Since your sister is a second year, she will not have to decide until later this year."

"Well, we've thought about and all of us have decided to take Arithmancy, Care for Magical Creatures, and Ancient Runes. We've already bought the books."

Dumbledore made the notations and the moment they were sorted into their Houses would alert their head of House. "Most take the easier studies of Muggle Studies and Divination." Perhaps they would be sorted into Ravenclaw?

"Perhaps but we aren't like most people."

The headmaster gave a small chuckle. "That will be all, Mr. Suha. The only thing now is for you to be sorted but that will be on September 1. Since it is Tuesday, you can spend your time getting a feel for our school or you can visit Hogsmeade since you are an adult, Mr. Suha. Just be sure to alert a teacher first."

"Thank you, Headmaster." Shyamal stood, herding his siblings out the door.

Dumbledore stared at the door. A fifteen year adult. He will have the portraits throughout the castle keeping an eye out on the magic the elder Suha performed to see the potential of the holder of the second phoenix wand.

## Chapter Five- Hogwarts

Hala watched as the plume of white steam billowing from the scarlet engine trekked its way toward the train station located on the other side of Black Lake, its compartments filled with hundreds of Hogwarts students including their new friends, the Weasleys. A pot of bubbling excitement continued to simmer inside of her, her stomach roiling in anticipation of the Sorting that night. The past three days had been agonizing as the time slowly ticked by and now that it was here, she could barely hold herself together.

During their three day stay at Hogwarts, they had met almost all the teachers at Hogwarts except for Professor Trelawney who was the Divination teacher and usually tended to keep to herself in her tower. Cosmas and Damian had met up with Professor Snape and Sprouts, the latter who was the teacher for Herbology, no doubt asking what they needed to become a healer. From their talks late at night, the two teachers had been prodding them to join their respective Houses. Shyamal was keeping more to himself as he kept an eye on his younger sister from a distance though he mingled from time to time. As promised, all of them spent time with Professor Hagrid who was giddy at taking care of four Seraphinas. He had even asked them if he could use them in his plans for the year.

The white plume had stopped at the station, a dark mass moving around on the platform. A few minutes later, the fleet of yellow spots started across the lake, while another line making its way around the path that circled the edge of the lake and Forest up to the stone steps of Hogwarts. No doubt the horses that pulled the so called 'horseless' carriages were in fact from the Thestral herd they had stumbled on when they had been riding the Seraphinas to give them a workout.

Hala shivered at the memory of seeing the horse.

It looked like the four legged animal except for the fact that it was pure black, so thin that they could see every single rib along the side of the animal, straggly black manes and tails. The reptilian face was long and thin, fangs peeking out from under the upper lip. Wings that resembled a bat stretched out along the side, folded as it ate from the carrion that was lying on the forest floor. As they had watched, another trotted out from the trees and started eating. The feature

that had caught their eyes was the eyes of the Thestrals themselves; shining pure white orbs.

Later, when the Seraphinas were back in their paddocks, they had asked Hagrid about what they had seen. The half-giant told them they were animals that could only be seen if they had ever seen a death and only then if they had accepted it. Being twelve, Hala hadn't really understood the conversation between Shyamal and Hagrid had about that. She had only known that she had seen one of the Blood Elves die during the five years they had been there.

"Hala! Come on! The students are going to be here soon and we have to be down in the Great Hall." Damian said from the doorway.

"Where's Cosmas?"

"Helping Shyamal get his trunk down into the living room so the house elves can teleport the trunks to our Houses once we're sorted." Damian threw an arm around her shoulders. "Can you believe it? Our first year in the Wizarding world. I hope I'm in Gryffindor."

Hala giggled. "You just want to be in that House because the Weasleys are there. Otherwise, you'd be asking to be in Ravenclaw."

Damian grabbed his chest. "You wound me." He winked at her. "But you're right. If all four of us are in the same house then we'd be able to plan our pranks more easily." They left her room and into the living room just to see their brothers dump Shyamal's trunk next to the others.

"All of you are ready? Come on then, we need to get down there." Shyamal led the way down the moving stairs to the Great Hall just to see the doors close after the last of the older students enter the room. Hala could barely contain herself. Feeling a hand on her shoulder she looked up to see Shyamal grinning at her. Hala returned it, her eyes dancing merrily.

I can't wait! Hufflepuff or Gryffindor? I love badgers but lions are cool! Oh, so many choices.

Shyamal waited tensely, watching as Hala bounced on the edges of her feet. Cosmas and Damian were talking quietly behind him as they waited which they didn't have to for long. Professor McGonagall rounded the corner that led to the dungeons, the group of first-years right behind her. She stopped before the Hall, turning around to face the nervous young face looking up at her.

"Welcome to Hogwarts. In a few moments, all of you will be sorted into one of the four Houses which are Gryffindor, Ravenclaw, Slytherin, and Hufflepuff. While you are here, your House will be become your family. Mischievous, tardiness, and rude behavior will cost you House points. Being on time, sportsmanship, and academic pursuits will gain you points, The House with the most points at the end of the year will win the House Cup. Wait here while I check to see if the rest of the student body is ready for you."

The professor disappeared behind the great oak doors. Whispers broke out among the first years, quite a few stealing glances at the four older teens standing separately from them.

Damian leaned toward Shyamal who was watching the first years with mild interest. "What happens if we're split into different Houses?"

"We'll find a way to communicate to each other. But first let's see what House we'll get into." Shyamal whispered back.

"If we're sorted in Gryffindor with Edward, I'm not going to be holding myself back." Hala whispered quietly. "If he's anything like what he was when we were small, he's probably already spread rumors about me to the rest of the House."

"I kind of what to be in Gryffindor. The only people we know here are the Weasleys and the whole lot of them is in that House." Cosmas pointed out.

Before Shyamal could say anything McGonagall appeared. "We are ready for you know. Mr. Suha, can you please lead your siblings behind the group as you will be sorted after the first years?" Shyamal gave her a quick nod, jerking his head toward the back of the group. "Follow me." McGonagall turned around, the doors opening to their fullest as the group marched up between the Hufflepuff and

Ravenclaw tables to stand right before the Head table. Sitting there on a stool was a decrepit looking hat.

Just as all of them stopped moving, the hat broke out into a song. While it sung, Shyamal was staring at the table furthest to the right, looking for the red heads. They were sitting closest to the head table, a girl with bushy hair sitting with them. Further along, near the doors, was Edward Potter talking with two boys that he hadn't seen so far. The hat stopped singing; Shyamal turned his full attention on the Transfiguration professor.

"Now, when I call your name, sit on the stool and I will place the Sorting hat on your head to be sorted." McGonagall called out the first name. One by one, the first years was sorted into one of the four Houses, the occasional catcalls coming when a first year was sorted into Slytherin. After what seemed like an eternity to the four siblings, the last first year, a 'Zeller, Rose' was sorted into the yellow and black House of Hufflepuff.

McGonagall looked up to the four tables. "This year we have four transfers from our comrades at Durmstrang. Please give them some time to adjust to our routine here at Hogwarts and help them when they ever need it. Suha, Cosmas."

The younger twin walked up to the stool and sat down. The moment the hat touched his head, it yelled out "GRYFFINDOR!"

Happily, Cosmas made his way down to the table adorned in red and gold.

"Suha, Damian." The older twin followed suit.

"GRYFFINDOR!"

"Suha, Hala." Shyamal gave his sister a small grin as she walked up to the stool. Seconds ticked by. He could see her small hands tighten on the edge of the stool, her lips moving in a silent plea. Just as Shyamal was about to explode from the waiting, the hat yelled out her House. "GRYFFINDOR!"

"Suha, Shyamal." As he walked up there, he could feel the weight of the hundreds of eyes staring at him. He could also feel the ones from his older sibling and his mother on him as well as the ones

from the teachers. Sitting down, he felt McGonagall gently place the hat on his head.

"What do we have here? The eldest of the four lost children."

"What do you mean?"

"Ever since I peeked into the inflated brain of your brother's head, I have been waiting to meet you, Harry." The hat chuckled at the discomfort of the teen. "I know your secret. Hmm, what do we have here? Saved your sister from a stampeding herd of wild Seraphinas. Ah, you refused to give up when your brother Cosmas was lost in the forest. My, my, my, you four have certainly had a busy five years. But you have a thirst to prove yourself to your parents. Perhaps you would do well for Slytherin?"

"NO! Anything but Slytherin." If he was sorted into Slytherin, the rest of the house would cause problems if he took care of his siblings as they had been sorted into the rival House. Anything but Slytherin. The risk of me losing control is too great.

"But you would do so well there. You have the ambition to prove that you are not worthless, that you can be someone great. Unlike your brother, you have what it takes to reach it. You are not blinded by the illusions that he has built himself to live these past five years. You've seen the worst and best of life. You know."

"I don't care! I have to protect my siblings. They count on me to get them through this. I won't leave them behind like what our parents did to me."

The hat chuckled in delight. "Despite living in the darkness, you've still have held to who you are, still willing to protect the light. Perhaps you will do your greatest with your loved ones around you so I see no other choice but to sort you into GRYFFINDOR!" The hat bellowed out to the hall.

Light swept into his eyes as McGonagall took off the hat. As he made his way to his siblings, he wanted to smile but he controlled himself. Even then, the corners of his mouth were lifted a bit. Down a few seats sat Edward, his face staring at him. The moment their eyes meet, the other boy turned away to talk to a dark skinned boy with dreadlocks.

Professor Dumbledore stood up. "Welcome to a new year here at Hogwarts to our old and new students. Now let the feast begin!" Shyamal blinked. The empty dishes before him were suddenly filled with massive amounts of food. Plates of mashed potatoes, buttered corn, steaming peas and carrots, bowls of beef stew, jugs full of pumpkin juice, and plates of bread and stuffing.

I don't think I'll ever get used to this. Shyamal thought as he helped himself.

A blur of black sat down right next to him. "So all four of you made into the House of the Lions!" A grinning Ron said. "I thought at least one of you might go to another House or something."

"Maybe it's in our blood." Cosmas said, winking at Shyamal. "Now that we know what House we're in, maybe it will be easier to prank someone."

Ron covered his ears. "Don't tell me." He pointed at the badge on his chest. "I've been made prefect this year so as Hermione said to me, there are certain lines that I cannot cross."

"Ah bugger then." Cosmas muttered.

Shyamal glanced at Ron. "Where is she? You said you'd be introducing us when we were at the feast."

"She's talking to the first years. That way they'll know that they will have to follow us after the feast so we can teach them the path to get to the Gryffindor common room." Ron took a look down the table. "Here she comes now."

Sure enough, the girl with bushy brown hair was walking up the table in their direction, a prefect badge on her chest. The twins huddled together to make room for her. "Hey Ron. I've just finished with the first years."

"Mates, this is Hermione Granger, fifth year prefect, brilliant student, and my only friend." Ron introduced. "This is Shyamal, Damian, Cosmas, and Hala. I meet them with Ginny when we went shopping to Diagon Alley."

"Please to meet you." Hermione shook hands with Shyamal. "What do you think of Hogwarts?"

Shyamal traded glances with Damian who shrugged as he got more food. "Well it's more medieval than what we thought it was. The grounds are beautiful and I'm waiting until the time we can go swimming in the lake next summer but other than that I can't really say. Ask me at the end of the week and I'll let you know."

"Man, doesn't your mom feed you or something?" Cosmas asked as Ron helped himself to the food.

"Cuf, se doesh. Jus hung'y, oo no." Ron said around a mouthful. Hermione elbowed him and he swallowed. "I've always had a big appetite."

"He probably has a really fast metabolism or something." Damian got some more mashed potatoes.

Hermione leaned toward the twins. "You might have to be careful though. Potter's mom and Sirius Black are now professors here. I think the reason they took up Muggle Studies and DADA was because of last year, during the Tournament."

Shyamal's interest kicked in. "What happened? The Daily Prophet just said that he appeared in the middle of the maze and that Dumbledore had to retrieve Cedric's remains later that night."

"Yeah, must people believe what the Ministry has been printing, that it was just a bunch of rogue Death Eaters and stuff. They're claiming that Potter is lying and just wants more attention. It's not that hard to believe as Potter's is always trying to be in the center of attention and throws a tantrum when he's not. He's like Malfoy that way." Hermione explained.

Ron snorted angrily. "The git is worse the Malfoy, 'Mione. The only reason why he can get away with things is because of who he is. How many times would he have died now if it wasn't for other people?"

"What do you mean?" Damian asked, his fork halfway up to his mouth.

Hermione shook her head. "When we first came here, the three of us were friends you know. Not particularly close mind you but enough. In the first year, there was this professor who turned out to be the willing host for the You Know Who's spirit. We were able to piece together what he was here for and went to go stop him as none of the teachers believed us. In the end, Potter decides to go and act the hero but almost gets himself killed. Luckily, Professor Dumbledore was able to step in and Voldemort fled, leaving his supporter behind to die. We got points for that but the second year was the worst." Hermione glanced at Ron who just glared at his plate. "Voldemort came back and was controlling Ginny through a diary. He released a basilisk on the students who were getting petrified left and right. It was so bad that the Board was going to close the school down. Finally, we were able to piece together that it was a snake and where it was located. Through some luck, Edward was able to speak parseltongue enough to get into the Chamber. But I knew better so I went to get Professor McGonagall and Snape who went down there and helped to kill the thing. But after that, Potter believed that Ginny's was his to date. The following year, he basically harassed her."

Hala huffed angrily. "Please tell she did something." Ron and Hermione laughed.

"Oh, my sister may be the youngest but she does have a temper. She bat-boogeyed him. Took a while for Flitwick to get rid of the hex. After that, we ended our friendship. So now there's a mutual hate between the Potter family and the Weasleys." Ron admitted. "Good riddance."

"I have to agree. Potter really believed that Ginny should be his property after so called saving her?" Shyamal shook his head in disgust. "I never thought fame could inflate a person's head so bad."

"Tell me about it. Of course, to save face, he spread rumors about Ginny being a whore and a scarlet woman. I got detention for the rest of my third year after hexing him myself." Ron stated.

"If he talks about my sister like that, I'll do it the next day."

"Just hope you do it in front of McGonagall. I did it in front of Snape and Gryffindor lost the House cup that year."

Cosmas sputtered, his drink spraying everywhere. "And how are you a prefect?"

"Ignored Potter in our fourth and tried to help the rest of the students that were getting bullied on. Not good as I share dorms with him." All of the Suhas winced.

"It doesn't matter. I'm proud that Ron grew up." Hermione gave the red head a smile who blushed. The rest of the group laughed. At that moment, the Weasley twins arrived, Cosmas and Damian getting closer to them so they could speak in low voices without being heard.

"You do have to say that Edward will have an interesting year." Shyamal smirked.

"If they get away with it, it'll be bloody brilliant, especially now that his mom is here." Ron restated, tilting his drink over to the red-haired woman sitting next to McGonagall. "The Potters are very protective."

Shyamal gave a small smile before eating again.

A half an hour later, the tables was wiped clean of the remains of the dessert as Dumbledore climbed back to his feet, all of the chatter between the students ending almost immediately. "Well, now, for some last words before you all head to your beds. As the older students know, the Forbidden Forest is off limits to all students. Mr. Filch has kindly asked me to remind you that the list of banned items has been updated which can be found on his office door. Also, magic is forbidden between classes in the corridors.

"This year we have a few changes in our staff here at Hogwarts. Please welcome Professor Lily Potter who will be taking over Muggle Studies and Professor Sirius Black who will be taking up the Defense Against the Dark Arts classes. Madam Delores Umbridge has been stationed here to oversee the ongoing business here at our school so please give her a warm welcome. Tryouts for the House Quidditch teams will be held two-"

"Hem, hem." All eyes went to the toad-looking woman who sat down a little from the Headmaster, already climbing to her feet. Shock filtered on professors' faces even though Professor Dumbledore's

had changed to one of rapt attention. Shyamal glanced over at Ron and Hermione to see shock and disgust on theirs.

His eyes flicked back to the woman as she started to speak. "Thank you, headmaster for that kind introduction." Shyamal took the time to study her. Though she was standing, her height had barely gotten any higher. The pink cardigan seemed highly offensive against the mass of black and the darker colors of the professors. Umbridge continued in her high girlish voice. "How good it is to be back at Hogwarts. I'm sure by the end of this year, we'll be very good friends.

"As you all know, the Ministry of Magic prides itself on helping the students of Hogwarts on reaching their potential within the hallowed grounds of this school. Traditions that have been passed down through the generations of wizards and witches before you must be passed on to the next generation lest they be forgotten. A balance, however, must be forged between the traditions of the old and the innovations of the new lest we fester in stagnation and decay." Shyamal faded out, looking over at his brothers. Cosmas had laid his head on the table on his arms, eyes closed. Damian was still trying to pay attention but was losing at the battle as his fingers tapped out a rhythm on the table top. Hala was playing with a goblet, rolling it back and forth between her hands.

Sputtered clapping sounded, causing Shyamal to realize the speech had ended. Professor Dumbledore climbed back to his feet. "Thank you, Madam Umbridge for that illuminating speech. Now, Quidditch practices will be held two weeks from now. Rosters will be tacked on the Houses' respective boards to where team hopefuls will be able to apply for positions on the House Teams-"

"Hermione, I don't get what you're saying." Ron said, hunched closer to his friend.

Shyamal leaned closer to hear Hermione's reply. "What it means, Ron, is that the Ministry is interfering here at Hogwarts. Dumbledore has been sacked from the Wizengamot and the International Confederation of Wizards-"

The screeching of tables and the thundering of hundreds of feet signaled the end of the feast. Catching Damian's eye, Shyamal nodded toward Hermione and Ron who were also getting to their feet.

"Hermione, since we don't know the password for Gryffindor Tower, we'll stick with you."

The bushy haired girl nodded. "Just stick close." She turned toward the moving mass of red and gold. "First years! First years please follow me!" She called out, waving her hand as she moved toward the rest of the prefects. She elbowed the tall red head who quickly caught on.

"First years! Hey, midgets!"

"RON!"

Ron led the three brothers up to their dorms. The circular staircase wound itself up through the center of the tower, leveling out onto wide landings before spiraling up again. Each landing circled the width of the staircase, connecting the five or even six doors that lead to the dorms on that landing. As they climbed, Ron explained to them about the House. "Every year has about 30 students. Each dorm has about 5 or 6 students bedding together." They walked out onto the fifth year landing. "You're lucky. Fifth year had about 28 kids so the last dorm has four kids."

The red head opened the door opposite of the landing. Inside were six beds, Cosmas and Damian's trunks against the far wall. "This will be your room for the next three years." Shyamal and Ron left the two boys to get acquainted with their dorm-mates who had just appeared.

"In our year, there are thirty five students so you'll be bunking with me in our dorm." Ron started as they climbed to the next landing. He paused at the door and turned to Shyamal. "Just to tell you, our dorm-mates are Neville Longbottom, Seamus Finnigan, Dean Thomas, and Edward Potter."

Shyamal winced inside. His brother was his dorm-mate? Maybe he should have been sorted into Slytherin.

"Neville isn't so bad; just shy you know?" Ron opened the door and stepped in. Shyamal followed, letting his eyes take in the details.

He could see his trunk in the far side on the right hand side. A trunk covered in Chudley Cannon stickers was on the far left. Next to the door on the left was a trunk with the Potter crest, a rearing gold and red lion on a beige backfield with a laurel right above it. So he would be sleeping directly opposite of his brother. Not bad.

"Neville sleeps there." Ron pointed to the middle bed on the right. "Seamus, there." Middle left. "And Dean here." The bed closest to the door on the right. Ron climbed onto his four poster bed, smirking at Shyamal. "Good thing the classes start on Monday, huh? A whole weekend to finish our summer assignments."

"I don't have to do any since I'm a transfer but I think it would be prudent if I saw what you guys are working on before I step into class." Shyamal said, starting to disrobe. "I don't want to cost the House any points on the first day."

"You might have to watch out for Snape. The dungeon bat always takes points away from us just for being Gryffindors."

At that moment, Dean, Neville, and Seamus entered the room. They greeted Ron and introduced themselves to Shyamal who smiled lightly back. Dean started talking as he pulled off the outer black robe. "I wonder if that Umbridge person is going to be a decent professor."

Ron snorted. "Hermione thinks it's a setup from the Ministry after what happened last year. Did you guys read the articles?"

Seamus nodded but not saying anything. Shyamal shrugged. "I don't read anything that's under the firm control of the government. Most of it is political mongering between all of the parties."

The boy, Neville, spoke up. "My gran thinks so too. She even went as far as to cancel our subscription. She firmly believes Dumbledore, saying if he says You Know Who is back, then he's back."

Any further talk stopped when Edward entered the room. No one talked as he swiftly started to disrobe, pulling out his night clothes.

Shyamal saw as Dean and Ron exchange looks. "Had a good holiday, Potter?"

"What do you think, Thomas?" The raven-haired teen bit back. "Do you think I had a great holiday after all the rubbish the newspaper was printing about me?" He caught the look on Seamus' face. "Oh, please, don't tell me that you believe all that talk."

The boy continued to unpack. "My mom was thinking of having me stay at home for the year, you know. To get homeschooled."

"Your mommy didn't want you to mingle with the likes me, did she?"

Dean interrupted. "Look, mate, people are just curious as to what really happened that night. You just appeared with Cedric's body and then suddenly, the rest of the professors are suddenly talking about Professor Moody and stuff."

Edward snorted angrily. "Why don't you read the stupid paper like his mom did. You'll find out everything you need to know from there."

Seamus' eyes flared dangerously. "Don't you be having a go at my mother, Potter."

"Why shouldn't I? Your mom thinks I'm a bloody liar. You probably even read them just as she does."

"You know she's right. You are crazy."

"Go to McGonagall then and ask her to see if you'll change dorms."

"So you can go to your mummy and tell her how a Gryffindor was badmouthing you? That's all you do, Potter. Run to your parents like a cry baby. I bet the reason why your siblings are dead be—" Seamus' head snapped back as Edward's fist connected with his jaw.

Shyamal dropped his things and rushed forward with Dean to hold Edward back as Neville and Ron did the same to Seamus. Edward was vibrating with barely controlled anger. "Don't you dare talk about my siblings."

"Well it's true. They did die after your birthday. I bet you were too busy celebrating with your Death Eater brother. I wonder if you're

one too." Shyamal and Dean held on as Edward lunged at the other boy, dragging him back close to the door.

Shyamal moved between them. "This is going to help anybody. Both of you just leave it and go back to unpacking."

"Tell that stupid git to take back what he said. I never killed my brothers and I'm no bloody Death Eater."

Shyamal held onto Edward. "Leave it be. Name calling isn't going to get you anywhere."

Edward brushed off Shyamal and Dean's hands, giving Shyamal a death glare. "Are you trying to get into my good graces after your sister stumbled into me at the book store?"

"No, I'm just trying to stop this from going any further."

"Oh, so someone in your family actually has brains. Your sister sure didn't seem to have any when I talked with her. Perhaps the reason you came here is because your sister is a—" Edward's next words were caught off as Shyamal's hand shot out, his fingers wrapping around the tanned throat and slamming him into the wall.

## Chapter Six- Between Enemy Lines

Shyamal relaxed his fingers, watching as the other boy gasped for breath. "This is a warning, Potter. If I hear any more talk from you about any of my siblings, Voldemort will be the least of your worries." He let him go, watching as the boy crumbled to the floor in disgust.

Edward glared at him, hazel eyes burning with fury and embarrassment. "Once Dumbledore hear-"

"Once he hears about how the golden boy of the Wizarding world is spreading rumors about the new group of students before they even meet them, I wonder what he will think of you." Shyamal leaned in close. "He might even think you're turning into another Dark Lord." His face was now less than an inch away. "A slip can turn into a fall. You might want to think on that." Shyamal turned away and went to his bed. Behind him, he heard Potter give a huff before the curtains swished closed. He turned to Seamus whose face was beginning to redden into the beginning of a bruise. "I might have something that can help that heal faster."

"That would be great. I would like not to go to the infirmary and explain to Madam Pomfrey how I got this." He caught the small jar Shyamal threw at him. Opening it, he smelled it. "What's in here?"

"Some phoenix tears and other medicinal herbs that grow naturally in Romania. Works wonders for bruises and small cuts." The two boys traded knowing grins. Seamus went over to where a mirror was and began applying the icy blue goop inside.

"You have a phoenix?" Ron asked interestedly. "The only person I know that has a phoenix is Professor Dumbledore's and his name is Fawkes."

"I don't have a phoenix personally as the one I get the tears from is a wild black one that isn't bonded to anyone. But I did save him once and we became friends." The lie easily came off his tongue, not wanting to explain why, in fact, it was the phoenix that saved him and his siblings.

"I thought he would have to bond with you then? And it's a black phoenix? I thought they were red and gold."

"Once the phoenix gets past a certain age, they can no longer bond. Those who have phoenixes as their familiar usually had them when they were babies who just hatched. Very few phoenixes abandoned or give their eggs or leave them for long and it doesn't help that they are rare creatures either. The last recorded birth of a phoenix before Fawkes was two hundred and thirteen years prior." He caught the small jar as Seamus threw back it with his thanks. "Most phoenixes are red and gold but just like any other species, evolution and personality can make a few that have different colors. I've seen a red and gold one like Dumbledore's and the black one that saved me. There are more varieties but I haven't seen them. Perhaps Fawkes is red and gold because Dumbledore is a Gryffindor at heart and those are the house colors."

"Wow. So the chances of another human getting a phoenix tamed is slim." Dean asked eyes wide.

"Yup." Shyamal yawned. "I'll see you guys tomorrow." The boys said goodnight, curtains swishing close and lights going out.

It was growling in the darkness.

Black eyes flashed with an emerald flame, the feline orbs gleaming in the shadows of his mind.

Shyamal breathed slowly, trying to keep focused on the beast prowling the ethereal edges, imagining the restraints tightening even as it roared in fury. Even through the barriers, he could feel its need for freedom, for blood. It roared again. The waves of dark magic rolled in chaotic motions, bashing against the restraints that glowed with a golden white light.

Shyamal itched to release it, fingers twitching unconsciously.

The calls of the thing behind the restraints called to him but at the same time, he cringed back in fear in thought of what would happen if he released it.

He could feel the need to take back what would have been his family, even if it meant spilling blood into the rivers of the world. It might even hurt Edward or even Dumbledore.

Another roar broke through, the restraints straining even more. One broke, snapping into millions of shards of ethereal light.

Shyamal shot up in bed, panting heavily. He held out a shaking hand, a small orb of light illuminating the inside of the curtains; red, gold, and black. The carvings on the bed posts taunting him, the eyes of the dozens of lions gazing into his soul as if they could see the beast in him. He flicked his hand, the orb dying out, casting the bed back into darkness.

Tomorrow, when he could, he would have to weave more restraints on it to keep it in check.

It couldn't be let out again.

One death was enough.

The weekend saw a change in Edward's attitude just a bit, his strutting less pronounced. Most of the student body believed it was from the dozens of articles in the Daily Prophet regarding his mental stability. But Shyamal had an inkling it was from the talk Friday night about him turning into a Dark Lord. Every time, they neared each other in the corridors or in the rooms, Edward steadfastly ignored him, either walking away or staring on past him as if he wasn't there.

The four siblings kept to themselves, catching up on the lessons their respective classes had gone over or playing out on the grounds near Hagrid's hut. They had tried the water of the lake and found it be cold enough to feel like their bodies were burning. Hermione and the Weasley siblings joined them from time to time, especially on Sunday when the eight Quidditch players enjoyed a game as Hermione read in the stands, reading up on the Seraphinas from a book she had found in the school library.

On Monday, they started their classes. History of Magic had been a boring experience. Shyamal was surprised to find the class being taught by a ghost who had died one night and simply gone back to his classes the next morning, leaving his body behind. He thought it would have been nice if Professor Binns hadn't been so attentive to

his duties, choosing to go on to the next leg of life rather than coming back. The class took the chance to daydream, finish some homework, or catch up on lost sleep as the professor droned on about wars and battles long past.

The next class period, Shyamal found himself sitting in Potions, working on the Draught of Peace. The Head of Slytherin House had walked in, sneering at Potter as he passed. The homework over the break was turned in and the class started on their class work. During the whole time, Snape hovered over Potter's shoulder until Neville spilled a bottle of hellebore near his desk area. When he saw Snape was heading back over to Edward after taking five points from Neville for carelessness, Shyamal knew something was going to happen

"What is this, Potter?"

"The Draught of Peace." The boy drawled back. Shyamal gave his cauldron one last stir. Potter's cauldron was too thick, a true Draught of Peace being fluid in its movements. Even the colors was off.

"Tell me, Potter, didn't your father teach you how to read?"

"Yes." Already, Edward's face was turning red with anger.

"Then read the fifth instruction." Edward did so, his face paling slightly as he came to the end. "Did you follow instructions?"

"No."

"Well, then. That is no marks for the day." Snape flicked his wand, the contents in Edward's cauldron disappearing instantly. Shyamal was surprised Edward didn't start spitting back at Snape, choosing instead to grind his teeth. "I want a 24 inch parchment on why it is important on carefully preparing a Draught of Peace. Due the next time we meet, Potter."

Shyamal saw the professor walk away as he pulled out a flask from his satchel. He carefully placed some of the potion into it and wrote his name and year on it. Shyamal finished cleaning up his station and cauldron when the bell rang throughout the castle, signaling the end of the period. Shouldering his bag, he walked up the stairs into the main hall.

Thanks to the explorations over the weekend, Shyamal made it on time for DADA. Taking a seat in the back, he studied the man sitting at the desk in detail.

Same shaggy black hair now with some slight coloring at the roots, Sirius Black hadn't changed much in appearance. A few wrinkles around the edges of his eyes and lines adorned his face. Still tall and good looking, Shyamal wondered if he was still a bachelor. He pulled out his book and writing tools, trying to repress the bubble of hidden anger building up in his chest. Out of James Potter's remaining best friends, Sirius Black had been Harry's godfather, Remus Lupin being Edward's, joking that he would try to corrupt the cub that had Lily's eyes. After that Halloween, Sirius had forgotten him, leaving him to watch his siblings from the darkness while Edward bathed in the light of fame.

His eyes flicked over to the woman toad sitting in the corner. She was wearing an ugly dress and the same cardigan from the feast. And she was staring right him.

He stared back at her.

Umbridge's lips quirked up in a parody of a smile before turning back to look at the class as the bell rang again.

Black stood up, hands on the desk before him. "You guys know the drill. The beginning of each new unit will comprise of reading the theory behind the spell and learning to pronounce it correctly. The next few lessons will be the actual practice of the spell itself."

"Hem, hem."

Black sighed, eyes closing for a second before looking at her. "Would you like to add something?" The words were slightly growled at her.

"Perhaps it would be prudent to focus on the theory of magical defense. Studying the actual spells themselves is too far advanced for fifth year students."

"That is what I'm doing, Madam Umbridge. If the student can't practice the spells then it obviously means that they haven't grasped the theory. If need be, we will go back."

Umbridge narrowed her eyes at him. "It is not because you are trying to teach them spell work to supposedly face off against a non-existent threat?"

"Who said anything about that? I certainly didn't. Since this is the fifth year class, they will focus on subjects that might have the chance to appear on the OWLs. You have agreed with me and Professor Dumbledore that the students haven't been up to par on their coursework since their first year. As such, I will have to move quickly to cover five years worth of material that includes basic spells such as Expelliarmus, Stupefy, and others."

Shyamal would have laughed at the scandalized look on Umbridge's face. "Now, if you excuse me, I have a class to teach." The ex-Auror turned back to the class, a small smirk on his face. "The Expelliarmus spell is a simple one and is usually called the Disarming spell for obvious reasons. If used correctly, the spell will cause your opponent's wand to fly out of his or her hand and away from him. Those with enough power behind it will also cause the person to fly backward and if you have truly mastered it, the wand or object will fly toward you, allowing you to catch it. Who can tell me the problems with this spell?" Shyamal raised his hand to the interest of his classmates. Black was glad to call on someone besides Granger as Shyamal could see. Perhaps her reputation as a know-it-all reached the Potter family's ears with some negative results, no doubt thanks to Edward. "Yes, Mr. Suha?"

"The spell takes the wand away from the person. If the person wasn't thrown back, they can easily retaliate back by either engaging in physical combat or by Disapparating away. If the person is capable of wand-less magic, they can still cast spells and hexes."

"Excellent answer. Take ten points for Gryffindor. Would you please come here, Mr. Suha? I would like to demonstrate the spell on you." Black motioned for Shyamal to stand on the other side of the classroom. "Now, watch closely class. Expelliarmus!" The jet of magic shot toward Shyamal, who didn't do anything, the spell striking him in the chest. His wand rocketed out of his hand, shooting toward Black. The professor caught it. "To keep your wand,

it would be best if you kept a firm grip on it, making it harder to disarm you this way." Black threw Shyamal's wand back at him. "Firm grip, Mr. Suha." Shyamal nodded, watching as the spell came his way again. His wand vibrated a bit but didn't move. "See how it didn't fly out?"

"One would think it would be obvious to keep a firm grip on one's wand." Draco drawled sarcastically, his head held up by his hand.

Black looked at him. "If it was so obvious, then it wouldn't be used. In battle, most veteran combatants are relaxed during their fighting. Their grips may follow suit and if they are hit, are quickly disarmed. Ten points from Slytherin for inappropriate remarks, Mr. Malfoy." The boy's face flushed with anger, keeping his temper in check. "You can take a seat now, Mr. Suha."

The rest of the class had them reading from the textbook, taking notes. Shyamal glanced up from time to time, catching the Ministry puppet glaring at Black with barely concealed hatred. No doubt, she was going to find a way to take control of the Defense Against the Dark Arts class. As the period came to end, Black was asking the class if they had any questions. Immediately, Edward's hand came up.

"Are you going to start up the Dueling Club, Professor?" He asked a hopeful expression on his face. Others in the class instantly perked up, interest crossing their features.

"We'll see. I have to talk to Professor Dumbledore first to set up times and limitations. I have heard of the so called Dueling Club held about three years ago and I can honestly say this year's will be different. I'm sure we can have more experiences hands involved in this."

"I do not believe the Ministry will approve of such things." Umbridge stated haughtily, her lips pressing in a thin smile. "Dueling Clubs are much too dangerous for young students."

Edward rolled his eyes. "I wasn't talking to you. I was talking to Professor Black."

Umbridge tutted. "Such disrespect, Mr. Potter. I'm sure detention will fit well for you."

"Madam Umbridge, you are not an official staff member here and as such you cannot assign detention nor remove or give points to students for their behaviors. The most you can do is to advise a teacher. I say a ten point deduction will suffice as a warning." Black sent a glare to Edward, warning him to stay out of it.

"But-"

"Potter, I believe the Professor told you to stay out of it." Shyamal hissed toward him, receiving shocks from the Gryffindors. Their saving grace was the bell. As the class gathered their stuff to leave, Umbridge walked up to Shyamal.

"I would like to see you in my office, Mr. Suha." The toad waited just long enough for him to gather his things before leading the way down to the room that survived as her office while she stayed at Hogwarts.

He wanted to gag at the hideous decorations adorning the walls of the room. Shyamal watched as the Inquisitor sat down behind her desk.

"Now, dearie, I'm sure you are wondering why you are here instead of back with your siblings." Umbridge started in the sickly sweet girly voice of hers.

"Yes, ma'am." Shyamal said, trying not to gag on the last word.

"Ah, well mannered. More than what I can say for Potter." Her chubby fingers clapped together. "When the Ministry heard that you were transferring to Hogwarts, you can say we were quite-concerned- with the education you have received as well as the reasons as to why you transferred here."

"Headmaster Dumbledore has already interviewed us regarding our visit. I'm sure if you talk to him, he will tell you of the circumstances regarding our status." Shyamal had a feeling she wasn't ever going to ask him.

"I have received his report on you when he filed it into your folders. The information in there has quailed any fears. Rather I am interested in the relation between you and Potter."

Shit. Shyamal thought. Did Dumbledore place in their files that Cosmas and Damian were werewolves? From the attitude he had seen, Shyamal suspected that Umbridge was for pureblood superiority, a Death Eater thinker without the stupid Dark Mark.

"I have been hearing rumors of the confrontation between you and him on Friday night. I am quite surprised that you didn't get detention for hexing him." That neither confirmed if she knew their secret.

"Are you going to report me to Headmaster Dumbledore?" Shyamal quietly stated his eyes boring into Umbridge's. He noticed her mouth twist into a parody of a smile again.

"Oh no no no, dear. This is just between you and me." She leaned forward, her eyes flaring with interest. "You see, child, the Ministry takes great care of its wards and Hogwarts has become somewhat of an unstable environment for younglings like yourself. We fear that Headmaster Dumbledore may have gone. . . . soft in his old age and may no longer be fit to perform his duties as stated by the Board. I am here to oversee his handling of affairs here at the school during the next year."

"And exactly what does this have to do with me?" Shyamal crossed his arms, his mind running through possible scenarios. Umbridge stunk of evil darkness, her presence dirtying the air around him. How much he wanted to gag. He breathed through his nose, drawing in deep breaths before releasing it through his mouth.

"The Ministry has seen to appoint me into the new position of High Inquisitor. I cannot trust the prefects nor the Head Boy or Girl so I will be creating a new group of student leaders who will report only to me alone. I would like for you to join."

"You want a spy in Gryffindor Tower, to spy on the Potter brat."

"The benefits of joining the squad would be beneficial to you and your siblings. Things are changing around here and Dumbledore will no longer be in charge of Hogwarts as he once was. His corruption on the young students will end by the school year."

"If the Gryffindors or any other House sees me with you, I doubt the benefits will be all that good." Shyamal said nastily.

"Simply, you would report to me under the guise of detention." Umbridge leaned forward. "By the year's end, the rewards will be bigger for you and your siblings."

Shyamal thought about Dumbledore. He seemed to be losing Hogwarts through the actions of the Ministry. He had stated that no one would know about Cosmas and Damian. Hala would be targets as well. For protection, all he had to do was spy on the Boy Who Lived. But Umbridge was against half breeds and the like it seemed. What would she do if she found out that Cosmas and Damian were werewolves? "I'll do it. The only information I have as of right now is the Gryffindors think Edward Potter is proclaiming the return of Voldemort to gain more fame and glory. From what I have seen of him, it seems to be true. Potter is refusing to talk about what happened that night and any actions the other students try to take to find out are met with some hostility. That was how the confrontation came to be on Friday night after someone voiced disbelief about him."

Umbridge's fat fingers tapped along the desk top. "Just the way the Ministry would like it. If anyone tries to talk with the Potter boy, divert them. I want no one having contact with him regarding Voldemort."

"I can only do so much. Dumbledore knows I came here for protection from Voldemort if he has indeed return. If I show signs of suddenly disbelieving him, it will lay suspicions on me which we cannot afford. Besides, Potter is doing well in isolating himself."

"Do what you can then. You are free to go." Umbridge handed Shyamal a slip of parchment. "Run along, dearie."

Shyamal left. Trotting swiftly along, he glanced at the parchment. What he read made him think Umbridge had been planning about this since the rumors began.

## Chapter Seven- Chess Play

That night, the four siblings were in the library hidden in the back among the dusty and worn tomes. The twins and Hala had just finished recruiting their first day when Shyamal told them about his run in with Umbridge.

"You said what?" Yelled Cosmas, making Shyamal glad that he had cast a Muffliato spell around them so others wouldn't be able to listen on to their conversation or get kicked out by Madam Pince. "Why would you spy for that hag?"

Shyamal just looked at his youngest brother. "Being close to her allows us to see who she really is. I know it's dangerously reckless to be willing to enter her lair but I cannot afford to lose the opportunity to watch her. Out of all the people here, she's a dangerous piece; the Ministry's Queen."

"But she'll be expecting updates on Edward regularly and good ones at that. Not to mention you have to remotely do things that look bad enough to land you in detention." Damian pointed out. "It looks like she has it out for him and people are going to start wondering why you are picking on Edward but still landing detentions with her. Black will start to get suspicious."

"He's lucky Dumbledore was able to appoint Sirius Black as the Defense Against the Dark Arts professor. I think the only reason Black accepted teaching here was because of the Ministry so Umbitch wouldn't take the position." Hala flipped a page in her Charms book. She blushed at the glare Shyamal sent her, finally noticing a curse had slipped into her talk while her brothers laughed. "Can you really believe he would become a professor besides the fact of protecting Edward?" Her brothers agreed with her.

"Do you really think Umbridge is a threat to Edward and Dumbledore?"

"Any person with enough clout and reputation is dangerous. It doesn't help that Dumbledore has been tarnished by the Daily Prophet and lost his standings among the International Confederation of Wizards and the Wizengamot, either." Shyamal glanced at his Transfiguration book. "The Minister will do everything

he can to take away power from Dumbledore. Umbridge has already hinted that something will be happening soon, saying that she'll be elected High Inquisitor, whatever the hell that means."

"I have a feeling that this year is going to be chaotic." Cosmas mock-whispered mysteriously. "Anyway, did you hear, Shyamal? Angelina Johnson heard that you were willing to try-out for Seeker so she received permission from McGonagall to hold the Quidditch a week earlier."

"No, I didn't. Will you three be trying out as well?" Shyamal's eyes narrowed slightly. That would be next week then.

"Cosmas and I will try-out for Beaters but from what we heard, the Weasley twins are good, very good. It would be hard to win against them with their experience."

"I was thinking at trying for Chaser." Hala admitted. "But I'm still getting used to the coursework here so I might have to skip playing."

Shyamal nodded, turning back to his studying. The words on the page blurred as his mind started to wander off. Was it really worth coming back? He did have this need to see his old family but it looked like it hadn't changed a bit. Edward was still the insufferable spoiled brat he had always been, just now with muscle on his sturdy frame to back it up. Dumbledore was still the assured man he always was, watching over the wards in Hogwarts. Umbridge, now there was the dark queen of the Ministry. Shyamal wondered if she was like the other dark queen, Bellatrix Lestrange, Voldemort's second in command.

It was turning out to be a chess game with four groups instead of two.

Cosmas was right, it was sure going to be interesting.

Meanwhile in a different part of the castle, Lily Potter was staring at her oldest child, listening as he recounted his first day at Hogwarts this year. During dinner, she had learned from Sirius that Umbridge had it out for Edward now that she knew he was going to rise to her baiting. The only reason he hadn't gotten a detention was the fact that the new student Shyamal had told Edward to quiet down.

"Edward, you have to understand that Umbridge will be looking for any reason to discredit you. You have to learn how to control your emotions."

"But she's trying to prove that I'm a small boy who doesn't know anything." Edward replied.

"If you try to engage her, she'll paint you as an obnoxious brat who is trying to gain more fame. The Ministry already has the Daily Prophet under his thumb. We don't want Hogwarts to start believing him even more than they already do. Just try to focus on your studies or hang out with your friends."

Edward's head hung in embarrassment. "They won't talk to me along with the other boys in my dorm. Seamus' mom believes that I'm a nut case." A scowl appeared on her son's face. "And that new kid embarrassed me in front of them."

Lily had heard of the rumor that the eldest Suha had touched her son but after what Dumbledore had told them, she had brushed it off, thinking it was just a rumor. Why would Shyamal threaten the safety of his siblings for one single confrontation? "Was there a reason why, Edward?" A blush appeared. Lily sighed. There were times when Edward had indeed let his fame get the better of him. Perhaps she and James hadn't been right in not correcting his behavior when he was younger. "What did you say?"

"I-I might have, um, accidentally said something about his younger sister."

"Edward, let me be clear with you. I have heard from Dumbledore that Shyamal Suha is really protective of his siblings after the loss of their parents. You know they are from Durmstrang and with such a reputation about that school, they can't have rumors floating around them. Just be careful around them and don't act brashly."

Edward's eyes widened in shock. "They lost their parents?"

"Yes, Shyamal is their guardian under both Ministries as he has proven he can take care of his siblings. I for one don't want to know how far he will go to take care of them and neither do you." The warning in her voice was clear.

Her son looked at the ground. "Okay, I'll be more careful."

"Good. Now, it's getting late and you have to be up for your classes tomorrow." Lily gave her son a small smile. "I'm sure you don't want to be late for Minerva's class again."

"Good night, mum."

"Good night, Edward." The sound of the portrait door locking broke Lily's mask. Burying her face into her hands, she let her tears fall that had been threatening since that morning. Coming back here to Hogwarts had reminded so much of what she had lost. Standing up shakily, she went to the bedroom Dumbledore had set up for her.

On the bedside table, stood a small portrait that she had hid from James after that night five years ago and had kept close to her. Sitting down, she picked it up, gazing longingly at the frame.

It was the only portrait of all of them together.

They were sitting on the steps of their home in Godric's Hollow, smiling at something. James and Lily were on the higher steps, the one-year old Evangeline in James' arms, gurgling happily. Three year old Daniel was next to her, leaning against James' leg while his younger twin Jonathon was in Lily's lap. Edward and Harry were on the step below them, an open book in Harry's lap while Edward was playing with a latest model of a Chinese Fireball dragon.

If everything had turned out alright, Edward and Harry would have been in fifth year, Daniel and Jonathon in fourth, and Evangeline in second year. Their family would have been complete.

But fate hadn't granted them that. Now, out of the five children she had seen into the world, only two were alive and one of them was a Death Eater.

Lily clutched the photograph to her chest, wishing everything had turned out different, where her children were alive and with her and James, without the stupid threat of the prophecy hanging over their heads. Her finger traced the edges of the four small faces, wishing to had seen them grow up.

Sighing, she placed the photo back into her bedside table. Turning the covers back, she changed into her night gown and slipped in.

Edward entered the Gryffindor Common room, seeing the four Suha siblings in a corner next to the fireplace, talking and laughing. Painfully, he tore his gaze away from them, choosing instead to march up to the dormitory to his bed. Every step of the way, shadowy ghosts taunting him, the soft whispery sounds of laughter and giggling following him.

How much he loved his fame.

And how much he loathed it.

Throwing himself on the soft bed, he turned over to face the wall. At first, he had loved being in the spotlight, receiving fabulous gifts from unknown strangers. Dozens of the brooms were mounted in his toy room, the newest stocks at the time they had been released, top of the line toys thrown haphazardly in his walk-in closet, posters of famous Quidditch players lining his spacious walls.

And yet for the all the toys he had, the Potter Manor remained silent. No giggle drifting from behind closed doors, no laughter rolling down the quiet staircases, no one-second glimpses of black, brown, and red hair out on the grounds. Three of the four once used rooms remained as they were; silent sentinels to the children that had once lived in them. The other had been gutted out, an attempt to remove any traced of the betrayal.

How much Edward had wanted to tell the truth was too fearful of the punishments then and now.

He reached inside his chest, silent casting a Finite Incantatem spell. The glamour around his chest disappeared, a simple pendant appearing, the phoenix carved in black obsidian with platinum accents glinting in the gloom of his bed.

It once had been Harry's, left on his bedside table when he had last woken up in Potter Manor. During the search, Edward had sneaked in, knowing it would be the last time he would ever see anything belonging to his brother. In his quick trip, he had taken the pendant, the photo album Harry had collected, his small deer teddy, and the first book he had ever received. Edward had barely hidden the items

under a loose floorboard when he had heard his father scream in hatred.

The next day, Harry's room had been cleaned, everything taken out and replaced.

Edward recasted the glamour charm, hiding the pendant from view.

What was done was done. The only things he had were his remaining family and his fame. Edward's face darkened, he wasn't going to let the older Suha boy get away with the embarrassing remarks. He didn't know. Closing the curtains, he swore he was going to get back at him.

Tuesday morning Shyamal's breakfast was interrupted by the rather violent landing of a scruffy looking owl that righted itself, feet stepping into Shyamal's pancakes.

Ron sighed, reaching over as he muttered "Bird's a bloody menace."

Shyamal just grinned, waving off Ron's apologies. He cleaned his plate, piling it with more pancakes.

"Isn't that your brother's handwriting?" Hermione asked, looking over Ron's shoulder.

"That's Percy alright." Ron muttered darkly as he opened the letter. As his eyes travelled over it, his face reddened, his scowl deepening. At the end, he handed the letter to Hermione. "That bloody prat. I can't believe he goes criticizing our parents and he expects me to 'follow his path'."

Hermione quickly read over the long letter. "Well, at least we know Umbridge is here for a reason as we thought." She tapped her chin. "We saw how much she wanted to give Potter a detention. I'm sure that's one way she'll gain power."

"I thought only Hogwarts staff can do that?" Cosmas munched, swallowing his food at Shyamal's glare.

"It's astonishing how your brother can remember his manner at a glare from you but Ron over here still forgets his almost daily." Hermione looked at her friend as he stuffed a huge spoonful of eggs

into his mouth as if making a point. "Too bad you can't teach him some manners."

Shyamal gave them a small smile, trying not to remember how they learned their manners. "So what are you going to do about your brother?"

"Nothing. He's an arrogant prat just like Potter but just about something else." Ron said, shoving the letter into his pocket, making a mental note to throw it into the Gryffindor fireplace. "After he left our family to saddle up with Ministry, I don't want anything to do with him." Ron stabbed at his sausages, thinking. "I can't imagine abandoning my family right now."

"Family is an important thing but sometimes, there are things where you have to break from them." Shyamal saw the glance from Ron. "But now is not one of the times. Fudge is trying to save his position in the Ministry. He's not the one who can handle the demands of a war with Voldemort."

"I wonder what else he's going to bundle up." Damian remarked, handing Hermione her paper back after checking the Quidditch standings. What he had glanced in the rest of the paper had disgusted him. "He's alienating all of the so called dark creatures that could side with us."

Hermione nodded. "He thinks just like the rest of the wizarding community. If it's not a wizard or witch, it's not human or an equal. It reminds me of how they treated Professor Lupin here one time."

Shyamal's ears perked up though he quickly hid it. "What do you mean?"

"Professor Lupin was our third year professor and one of the best ones we had. He is another friend of the Potter family but he's alright, more down to Earth. His teaching is similar to Black though I have an inkling he made up Black's schedule but that is another topic. But during the last weeks of school, someone had blabbed that Lupin was a werewolf and soon after, Dumbledore started getting mails from concerned parents. Lupin decided to leave the school to save Dumbledore the hassle."

"The man was great." Ron added.

"Where is he now?" Hala asked, eyes turned to Hermione.

"The last time we heard anything about him was that he was living with the Potters in their mansion, since no one in the wizarding community would be willing to hire a known werewolf."

"Ouch, imagine not being able to provide for yourself." Cosmas shivered.

Ron nodded in agreement. "The first time we saw him, he looked kind of shabby looking, robes worn, baggage battered. I feel for the bloke." Seeing the looks at his description, he continued on. "He has this thing about charity, doesn't like to accept things from others but I think Mr. Potter talked to him after the year. He looked a lot better last year with newer robes and such."

"Well, we need to get a move on. Transfiguration is about to start soon. You know how McGonagall is like." Hermione took one last sip of pumpkin juice before getting her book bag. Shyamal grabbed his, watching his siblings go off to their classes.

The whole day, Shyamal could feel Edward's eyes on him and knew instantly the boy was planning to do something. He was going to have to keep a close eye on him. It was just a question if the boy was just a pawn or something more.

Wednesday morning, the attitude in the students changed drastically with the arrival of the Daily Prophet. Umbridge was sitting up at the Head table with a smug grin on her lips as she ate. Hermione gave a gasp of surprise as she read the lines out loud.

"Ministry Seeks Educational Reform: Delores Umbridge Appointed First-ever 'High Inquisitor'." She read aloud. "'In a surprise move last night the Ministry of Magic passed new legislation giving itself an unprecedented level of control at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.' Your brother says the activity at Hogwarts is a prime concern for them." Her eyes roamed down. "Educational Decree Twenty-Three which creates the new position of 'Hogwarts High Inquisitor'. There you go, that's how Umbridge gains more control here at the school." Hermione tapped the paper in disgust.

Silently, Shyamal took the paper from her, reading over the article himself. Not even a week into the school year and they've already given her more power. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw her nod at the Slytherin table where a few of the students grinned back. So they're on the boat with her. What to do?

Any further thinking on the matter was interrupted as Dumbledore got to his feet, all attention going immediately to him. "This morning, we have news to rely concerning the education here at Hogwarts. As all of you know, these past few years, we have seen many professors come and go as the years went on, quite a few of them not being to complete the entire year. Our DADA professor this year has came to me with these concerns and has asked that the Dueling Club be reinstated—" Wild cheers from the students started, chatter starting up again. Dumbledore cleared his throat, the whispers going silent but the tension still boiling underneath. "Be reinstated this year with the goal of bringing you up to speed on certain DADA subjects that have been glossed over. Right now, the Dueling Club will be overseen by Professor Black with help from the staff here at Hogwarts. The first meeting shall be held one week from this Friday here in the Great Hall. Lists of membership shall be posted tonight in the Common Rooms to see who will be willing to attend. Thank you."

The students got up from their chairs as they all left to head to their first classes. Shyamal moved to Ron and Hermione, chatting about the last Dueling Club at Hogwarts and the Dueling Club at Durmstrang. Behind the interested mask, Shyamal thought if they only knew the Dueling Club he was referring to were the lessons taught by the Blood Elves. Maybe he would a couple of skills he had learned but he would have to sit back and watch.

Red eyes gleamed in the darkness, watching in disgust as the tattered servant threw himself on the floor, begging forgiveness.

"I thought he was the one, Master. He was the Boy Who Lived!" Peter Pettigrew squealed in pain as the Cruciatus Curse came on him again, holding him in its painful clutches. Spit and blood flew from his mouth as he writhed in pain, his lips bleeding where he had bitten into it.

"Fool!" The dark figure hissed. "He was not the one! Edward Potter was not the one I attacked that night when I lost my body and my power. He is nothing but an illusion. The one I'm seeking has the

green eyes of the Killing curse, the other twin!" Peter screamed again, body continuing to convulse. "WHERE IS HE?"

"I do not know, Master. Your servants decided to raid the brats' party on the night of the full moon five years ago. The Potters believe their second eldest is a Death Eater and other others are dead. No one has seen him since then." Peter gasped out.

Voldemort leaned back on his throne, spidery fingers tapping on the armrest. "Perhaps that will work in our favor." His eyes flicked to Peter again. "Give me your arm." Grabbing the offered limb, he drew a single white finger against the black tattoo, hissing in pleasure at the glowing Mark. "This will assuredly work in my favor. I must find that Potter brat if I am to return to full power." He laughed cruelly as his servants appeared before him.

## Chapter Eight- Lunar Adventures

The rest of the week saw rumors flying around about Umbridge now, especially as she had started to interrupt Black while he was teaching his classes. Edward had taken his mother's talk to heart, keeping a lid on his mouth even though he would flush a deep red every time Umbridge would take a hit on him, something that had surprised Shyamal. The boys' dorms at night reigned silent when Edward appeared, any conversation dying quickly or continuing on awkwardly. Shyamal continued to talk with Ron, talking with the other boys now and then even though trying to keep Neville talking was proving to be hard. The only person he could really carry on a conversation with was his parents.

During the four days, Shyamal could only think of one thing.

Saturday night was a full moon.

Shyamal had talked with McGonagall on Friday after Transfiguration class, learning that Umbridge would be followed by various portraits and ghosts who would tail her so they would alert Dumbledore if she was heading for the Great Doors. If she was, a professor would be dispatched to the Shack to keep an eye on them if she made it outside and if need be to lead them into the tunnel and them into the room they had built underneath the Whomping Willow.

During the whole talk, Shyamal kept the fact that they were Animagus a secret.

As he ate breakfast, Shyamal could barely keep himself in check. He just couldn't wait for tonight.

Cosmas waved his brother forward while he kept an eye out for any student who was in their dorms. The seventh year students were down in the Great Hall, learning how to Disapparate and Apparate for their license once they came of age. That meant they could set up their prank for the Weasley twins.

Creeping along silently, they entered the large bathroom that served the Seventh Year dorms. The floor tiles were a pristine white with grey mortar, lion features carved into the red marble sinks. Gold

trimmings adorned the windows while the white walls gleamed brightly.

"Do that side first while I work on this side." Damian whispered, afraid to speak any louder in case a Seventh Year came up on them. "A small wave with a flick at the end." He reminded his brother.

Cosmas winked at him. "I know. I've been practicing." He headed off to the last stall, rolling up his sleeves. The two started to chant the spell they were using, watching as each shower stall glowed a bright pink-orange. They moved slowly as they weaved the spell over the area, trying not to laugh at the vision of the twins falling into their prank. With a last flick, the boys turned to the three baths.

"Can't overlook every single possibility, can we?" Damian muttered to Cosmas. Within five minutes, the last of the pink-orange glow disappeared.

With one last look, the Suha twins disappeared down the stairwell, laughing quietly to themselves, looking forward to that night.

Ron moved his bishop, gleefully watching as he decimated Shyamal's little army. "Check."

"King to C3." Shyamal's king moved over the board, taking his sword and slicing Ron's bishop in half. "I'm taking you down with me."

The red-haired boy gave him a grin. "That would be hard for you. Queen to C3." Shyamal watched in dismay as Ron's queen took her chair and shattered his king. "Checkmate."

"Gah! How many does that make now?"

"5-0." Shyamal's shattered pieces started to reassemble themselves, his pieces grumbling up at him and sending him disgusted looks.

"One of these days I'm going to beat you. Once I've totally Confounded you and I've taken Felix Felicis."

"In your dreams." Ron stated cheerfully.

They had just started their sixth game when a crash echoed through the door from the stairwell, followed almost instantly by loud yells and whistles.

"What in Merlin's name?" Ron said, jumping to his feet and heading up the stairs with Shyamal right behind him. Coming out on the landing for the Seventh Years, Shyamal saw the Seventh Year boys crowding around the door to the bathroom. "Oy, coming through; prefect here." Ron muttered as he forced his way through.

Shyamal broke free from the crowd. He had to take deep breaths to keep himself from laughing.

In the middle of the bathroom, still dripping water from their showers stood the Weasley twins, covered in soapsuds with a hastily thrown towel around their waists. They were explaining quite loudly of what had happened in the bathroom while they had been taking a shower.

"We had just gone in and started the shower after a hard day studying, you know—" George started.

"When we felt these warm hands touch us quite provocatively—" Fred continued.

"We turned around to see who snuck into our stall—"

"The woman was quite beautiful—"

"Exquisite and well formed—" George agreed.

"When she started to engage in activities—"

"We were not quite uncomfortable with."

"That's when she turned into Umbridge with rather revealing clothes." Everyone listening shuddered in disgust at the image produced from the twins' narrative.

The Seventh Year Prefect looked at them. "You mean to tell me that you guys were showering when a girl goes into each of your stalls and starts to engage in passionate embraces of which are not allowed on school and then suddenly turns into two Umbridges?" The twins nodded.

Lee Jordan laughed. "I think you've been standing over some rather intoxicating fumes, mate."

"Even I would have to agree that the twins daydreaming of Umbridge is rather horrifying." Ron stated, a small chuckle escaping him, exchanging looks with Jordan.

"We swear! They were real!" George argued, ears turning red in embarrassment.

"No woman came up the stairs." A Seventh year student pointed out. "We would have known if they snuck into the First Years' bathroom much less the Seventh Years'."

Shyamal walked into the bathroom, heading over to the stall. He got in, hearing the twins cry out in alarm. Nothing happened.

"Maybe they have an Invisibility Cloak." Someone called out.

"Then it wouldn't matter. They would have snuck out."

"I don't think so." Shyamal stepped out, drawing his wand. Whispering a Prior Incantatum, all of the stalls glowed a pink-orange color, the ghostly apparition of a different woman forming in each of them, wearing absolutely nothing except for the soapsuds covering strategic bits. "It's just a charm."

The Seventh Year Prefect moved over to the baths and did the same thing, this time the woman was laying wantonly across the marble baths. "Who would do this?"

Shyamal sighed. "I know who." He walked over to the staircases, leaning over to look down three floors. Cosmas and Damian had their heads out, looking back at him with grins. "Yup." The twins and Ron walked next to Shyamal to peak over the banister.

George and Fred both flushed a deep red. "YOU did this?"

Cosmas whooped in laughter as Damian yelled back up. "Until the other side gives in and if by the end of the year, neither have, the school votes on who's the best. No pranking during Quidditch but everything is up for grabs."

"Deal!" Fred yelled back down.

"Let the Prank War begin!" Cosmas and Damian disappeared back into their dorms. As Shyamal walked down the staircase, chatting with Ron about the new war, Shyamal started planning how to escape the Gryffindor tower without being seen.

The full silvery face of the moon shone brightly in the dark vault of the sky, the silvery fingers grooming the vast landscape of the Hogwarts grounds below. Ghostly howls echoed through the once silent air, a chilling symphony of the wilderness that only lived in nature, untamed and untouched by human hands. A shadow glided through the undergrowth, the jet black body moving stealthily, black feline paws barely disturbing the leaf fall. Green eyes glowed in the shadows, eyes picking any slight movement, rounded ears not missing a sound.

Behind the jaguar, a young tiger cub followed, its shorter legs pumping to keep up. The bright orange of her coat and the brilliant white of her underbelly clashed with the darker surroundings, Shyamal marking her easily against the foliage. The reason for her short stature was the fact that she was young in regards to age. Shyamal suspected as she neared 17, her Animagus form would start to mature into that of a fully formed tigress.

Flanking on either side of the tiger cub were the two werewolves, brown and easily loping in long gaits. Out of the four of them, Cosmas and Damian fitted in most easily with the Forest as wolves were quite common around these parts. The only differences were the markings of the werewolves and rather large stature. Shyamal was lucky his jaguar form was even bigger than theirs.

The small pack threaded their way deeper into the forest, free from the dark gloomy cloud settling over the aged castle. Centaurs watched from various knolls, bows armed and ready for the slightest hint or threat of bodily harm. Like transparent ghosts, unicorns fled, their heads bobbing nervously of the new wanderers of the Forbidden forest.

It had been twenty years since the last pack. Then, it had been one werewolf, a stag, a great Newfoundland, and a small rat. Unlike the

werewolf before, however, these two werewolves were more in control, thanks to the treatment and research of the East.

Severus Snape's Wolfsbane potion had been a medical breakthrough. With the appropriate treatment coupled with meditation techniques, an infected individual could learn to control the mind of the werewolf and in time, learn to control the transformation to the point they could shift at any time they want, including the nights of the full moons. But due to the treatment being recent, many Healers considered it an unproven theory that still needed more research and study.

Damian and Cosmas had taken a chance and had asked the Blood Elves to help them through the steps. In only the past two years, they had been able to exert any control over their werewolf sides and in the past year alone, had been able to control their transformations and in the few months had lessened the amount of times they would accidentally do a partial transformation.

While Cosmas and Damian were learning how to control their werewolf sides, Hala and Shyamal had gone with another Elven master to find their animal spirits. Wizards discovered their Animagus form through the taking of the Animagus potion that revealed their form, however, when they tried to transform into it, success was very rare. In fact, in the past 100 years, only seven had successfully completed it. The process overall was extremely painful during the first transformation, bordering on torturous. The Elven way was much more spiritual and more successful as the student took the time to connect with himself but it took longer. The first time Shyamal had connected with his magical core was five months after they had started. It had taken another seven months to even call upon his fur. By the end of the second year, he was able to shift into his jaguar form. Hala had finished her tigress form by the third year.

Shyamal chuckled in his mind at how cute she had looked when she finished her transformation. The round cheeks and innocent look in her feline eyes. The picture Akane's brother had taken without her knowledge was safely tucked away in Shyamal's trunk.

The group came to a stop at a small river, a herd of unicorns frolicking on the other bank. Cosmas and Damien started a wrestling match, playfully snapping and nipping at each others' hind legs and shoulders. Shyamal padded up to Hala, making sure to keep an eye

on the twins. With his great tongue, Shyamal started licking Hala's face. She gave a growl of annoyance, gently batting him in the leg with her small paw. He huffed.

Shyamal yelped in pain as Cosmas bit down on his tail. With a deep growl, he swiped at his brother's head, the younger werewolf rolling onto his back in a sign of submission, tail thumping on the floor. He growled softly, raking Cosmas' playfully with his large paw. Hala jumped on his back, her teeth nibbling along his spine. Shaking himself he turned to her as Cosmas got up.

They continued to play, wrestling each other and running around in circles.

Until Shyamal heard the unmistakable crack of a twig.

Freezing, Shyamal's ears flicked forward, his sensitive hearing picking up the crackling of branches and dried forest leaves. He growled in warning at the others, Damian immediately leading his brother and sister into a densely leaved brush, the three disappearing in the darkness. Shyamal stood in the middle of the clearing, trying to pick up on the approaching intruder.

The bush right in front of him rustled, an extremely large Newfoundland stepping out into the clearing.

Growling and snarling, Shyamal took a defensive stance, green eyes fixed on the black dog. The dog took a step toward him. Shyamal lowered his head, increasing his snarling, muscles coiling in preparation. Another step closer and Shyamal attacked.

The dog yelped, dodging away in the direction where his siblings had gone. Shyamal bounded after it. As soon as he could, he bit down on the tail, jerking the dog roughly to a stop. The dog turned around, yelping in pain and shock. Shyamal took the chance to leap on the canine's back. The dog retaliated by biting him in the hind leg, teeth digging in painfully as the dog shook its large head.

The two animals continued to fight, snarling and biting, snapping at anything they could reach. Shyamal had the advantage with the extra claws on his feet that were longer and sharper than the ones on the dog's paws.

Finally, Shyamal tipped the dog on its back, paw crushing the dog's throat.

It was then, the dog shifted into Sirius Black.

Shocked, Shyamal removed his paw as if burned, shifting into his human form. "Professor Black?"

The man coughed, hand going to his bruised throat. "Dumbledore never told me you were an Animagus." Blood trickled from the various cuts on his face from the fight. "I was out here to check on your brothers. I was shocked to see the Shrieking Shack empty and the scent of two animals following them into the forest. Poppy had told me she had made sure the doors were locked as she left."

"I'm sorry for attacking you. I thought you were a Death Eater or something." Shyamal helped Black to his feet. "I tend to keep our Animagus abilities a secret. Perhaps we should have told Dum—" Any further talk was interrupted by the loud howl of a large animal. "That's Cosmas!"

Shyamal shifted, his body changing into the graceful feline form of his jaguar. The large paws of Black thudded behind him as they two ran toward the spot where the howls and roars were coming from. As they got closer, they could hear the snarling and whistling of another beast over the painful yelps of one of his brothers.

Bursting through the last grove of trees, the two Animagus came out on a frightening scene. A large Acromantula had found his siblings while he had been fighting Black. Damian was held in the tight grip of the giant spider, covered in what looked like fine spider silk. Cosmas was trying to desperately to injure the underside of the spider while Hala distracted it. She screeched again, her small form striking here and there before the giant spider's head. Cosmas darted in, paws scratching against the underbelly. Shyamal didn't even think; he shifted back to his human form as he ran, withdrawing his wand from its holster. A blaze of fire came roaring out as he yelled "Incendio!". The Acromantula dropped Damian who tried to scramble to safety but couldn't because of his injured leg while the spider clicked its pincers in distress as the fire continued to burn away at its body. A hairy leg flew out, catching Shyamal in the chest, hurtling the teen against a tree.

Black shifted, casting the same spell on the spider Shyamal had used but with more control. The spider gave another screech of pain before retreating, smoke rising from where the fires had burned.

"Is everyone okay?" He asked, heading toward Shyamal who was gingerly getting to his feet. The two werewolves nodded, the older twin trying to remove the spider silk while the other licked Hala comfortingly. "Perhaps we should head back to the Shack. You guys had enough excitement for tonight." Black winked at Shyamal as they started moving off again.

Monday evening saw the Quidditch pitch almost the full house of Gryffindor waiting in the stands for the team try outs. Edward Potter was standing near the sidelines, Nimbus 2000 in hand. Angelina Johnson, George and Fred Weasley were standing there with Katie Bell talking quietly about who was probably going to give a good show. With a nod, Angelina broke free from the group and turned to look at the hopefuls.

"Oy, listen up! This year, we'll be holding open tryouts for all positions. Just because you made the team last year does not guarantee you a spot this year. You will have to earn it back." At this point, a few Gryffindors were sending glances toward Edward Potter who ignored them and continued to focus on Johnson. "We will also be having a reserve team unlike last year so in case anything happens; a replacement will be on hand. Is that clear?" She received nods. "Good, The first up will be the Beaters. Pick a partner and grab yourself a bat."

The practice continued, the Beaters giving everything they had in slamming the Bludgers home. Seeing the Weasley twins play, Shyamal had to agree that the five years of experience of playing on the Gryffindor team had them easily dominating over every pair and giving them an edge of Cosmas and Damian.

The Keepers were up next. Shyamal cheered as Ron successfully blocked all of his shots, doing an amazing feat of doing a barrel roll to block the last one.

At the blast of the whistle, the Chasers went into the sky. Though he had only talked to her on a friendly person basis, Shyamal was captivated by Ginny Weasley. She streaked through the air, her red

hair flying behind her as she raced toward the hoops, face contorted in fierce determination.

"Oh, Shyamal's got his eye on Ron's younger sister." Cosmas nudged Damian chuckling at the look Shyamal threw him.

"I do not."

"Right, you're just checking out her form up in the air." Cosmas suggestively said.

"It doesn't matter. I heard she's going out with someone." Damian distractedly replied, eyes still on the moving Chasers.

For some odd reason, hearing that, Shyamal's good mood decidedly plummeted.

Finally the Chasers were called back to the stands after Angelina took her shot. The three Seeker hopeful went out onto the field; Shyamal, Edward and some third year that Shyamal hadn't been introduced to.

Hearing Angelina blow her whistle, Shyamal mounted the school broom, kicking off into the air to the catcalls of his siblings and friends. Almost immediately a long forgotten feeling came over him, his low mood lifting. It had been so long, five years wroth, that he had indulged himself in this.

He rolled over instinctively, the sky spinning around until he was facing the green earth and colored stands of the Quidditch pitch. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw Edward steering his broom back around for another flyby.

So he was willing to fight for his position and play dirty too if need be.

Shyamal grinned. It wasn't going to be a slaughter then.

"I'm releasing the Snitches now!" Boomed Angelina's voice but Shyamal didn't hear her. The ten Snitches zoomed from the case she had opened. Despite being upside down, Shyamal pointed the broom down shooting toward the cluster of three flying close to the ground, heading to the far-side of the pitch. As he neared the ground, he rolled back on top, completing the barrel roll and flattening

himself against the handle to pick up even more speed. The cluster came into range. Shyamal reached out to grab the last fluttering ball of the group. It turned silver immediately and with a loud pop that was lost in the whistling of the wind, the captured Snitch disappeared. His attention turned back to the other two Snitches. They were spiraling up around the middle post, little arcs of golden light.

Rocketing up, Shyamal missed slamming into the wall, arcing into the first circle of the Snitches as they shot past. He grabbed both as they flew straight into his outstretched and open hand, their small sizes fitting easily between his fingers. They turned silver and disappeared.

Shyamal spun around to the middle of the pitch, just in time to see Edward catch a fourth Snitch hovering near the stands. It flashed red and disappeared. A glimpse of black had him turning to catch the third year student.

The boy was tailing him, hoping to swoop in to catch a Snitch before Shyamal did.

Lazy little bugger. Shyamal thought. Only one thing to do then if he wants to play 'Follow the Leader'.

Angling the broom toward the center, Shyamal acted like he had seen another Snitch. The boy followed, moving in closer behind Shyamal. Just as they evened out with the Staff Seating, Shyamal dived, gaining speed, hair whipping around his face. At the last second, Shyamal pulled up, evening out so his toes grazed the dirt. The boy was not as lucky as Shyamal heard a hard thump and the oohing of the crowds. He didn't turn behind him as he had caught sight of a fifth Snitch. It flew toward the stands, dodging left and right as it sped over the shocked heads of the Gryffindors.

Shyamal sped after it, trying to close the distance but as the golden ball swooped up following a viewing tower, Edward dropped down from the top and caught the Snitch as it sped right by him. Edward sent him a smirk, opening his hand to taunt Shyamal with the fifth disappearing Snitch.

Hmm, so he's a competent Seeker. Shyamal didn't brood on the lost Snitch. Instead, he sped off to where he had seen a sixth Snitch.

This one didn't move, turning silver as his fingers closed around it and disappearing. Edward's smirk disappeared as well.

So far, Edward had two that Shyamal knew and he had four. He needed two to clench his spot. Shyamal flew up over the pitch, eyes scanning the pitch and stands for any sign of the golden balls. There should be at the most four more in play if the third student hadn't caught any.

Shyamal spotted one and quickly went after it, the seventh Snitch disappearing. Suddenly the broom under him bucked, Shyamal grabbing the handle with both hands, legs tightening.

Someone was jinxing the broom.

Edward wouldn't be that selfish to jinx his broom right in front of the Gryffindor House.

The broom gave a harder buck, almost unseating Shyamal who couldn't reach his wand without fear of being bucked off.

A golden fluttering ball zoomed past him, hovering below him.

Shyamal focused on it.

Am I really that crazy?

He was only 30 feet in the air, the stands below him underneath the Snitch.

He looked back down, the Golden Snitch tauntingly lazing around the air beneath him.

Was he really that reckless?

## Chapter Nine- Of Parallels and Alliances

Hermione sat next to Hala Suha in the stands, a book tucked under her arm. "So you've decided not to try out for the Quidditch team?"

"Yeah, I don't think I'll be able to handle this schedule and my coursework. Maybe if we come back next year, I'll try out for a spot on the Chasers. I might have a better chance than." Hala tucked a lock of dark brown hair behind her ear. "It looks like they are starting."

The crowd around them roared with approval as they saw the Beaters take to the air. Hala cheered on her brothers as they flew past them on the school brooms they were borrowing. As the try outs continued, Hermione knew the Weasley twins would be the first string as they had the experience of three years behind them. With great timing and placements, they would aim the Bludgers just so they could knock off the Quaffle from the Chasers without any permanent injury to their victims. The Suha twins were close but slightly rough in their shots and flying; good enough to be on the reserve team, Hermione concluded.

A little later, the Keepers were flying around the posts in order, trying to block the five shots thrown at them from Angelina, Katie, and some seventh year Hermione didn't know. Ron was able to save all of his goals which made Hermione proud. Her best friend had come a long way from the reserved and shadowed boy in her first year that wasn't quite sure of his place in the world. She remembered how Potter's shadow of fame had hid him from everyone including himself, not allowing the youngest Weasley boy to find out his limits and abilities.

That had changed when Ron had turned on Potter for harassing his sister in his third year. Hermione had been afraid that Ron's desire to be more than his brothers would override his loyalty to his family and himself but Hermione had been happily wrong. Once he had broken free from Potter, Ron had come into his own. He had taken to protect the younger students from Draco, Edward, and their cronies. Their friendship had deepened in their third and fourth year to where they were now quite inseparable.

It had been no surprise to Hermione that McGonagall had given the Fifth Year Prefect badge to him.

"Go, Shyamal!" Hermione reverie was broken by Hala's yell of encouragement. Hermione had been so engrossed in her thinking that she had missed the tryouts for the Chasers. Hopefully, Ginny wouldn't ask her how she did. She watched in disgust as Edward dive-bombed Shyamal who did a 180 degree barrel-roll to avoid being knocked off his broom.

"Ugh, he's attacking like Malfoy." Someone sitting above them muttered. "I hope that Durmstrang student or the third year wins. I won't come to the games this year if Potter stays as Seeker."

"You and me both." Agreed another Gryffindor.

Hala jumped suddenly. "Oh, he's seen a Snitch!" The crowd watched in fascination as Shyamal sped off after a group of three that were bunched up heading for the far end of the pitch. Hala and Hermione cheered with the rest of the Gryffindors as all three Snitches were captured.

Shyamal started coming back, the third year now trailing him after giving up on Potter.

"He's trailing him." Hermione said, realizing what the boy was doing a second after Hala noticed.

"Shyamal's noticed. Look!" Her brother dived, rocketing to the ground as he picked sped.

"He's going to crash!" Yelled a first year muggle born.

Hala shook her head. "No, he's not but he is." Shyamal pulled up just in time, spiraling away as the other boy flattened into the ground. "It's never ideal to trail another Seeker. You may never know if they'll do a Wronski Feint on you."

"Potter's fighting for his spot." A girl said as they saw Edward snatch one from Shyamal as the Snitch flew up alongside the Gryffindor tower.

"Doesn't matter. He had his chance." A second year said, cheering as Shyamal caught another one.

The happy mood changed when the crowd noticed the broom Shyamal was using starting to buck uncontrollably. The Gryffindors started to panic, fear spreading through them all. No one wanted to lose another Hogwarts student so soon after Diggory's death last term.

"Someone's jinxing the broom." Hala turned to Hermione. "Someone did that to Edward in his first year. The broom was acting the same way." Hermione kept the fact that it was Voldemort himself that had been jinxing the broom to herself. If Shyamal found out, Hermione had no doubt that he would go back to Durmstrang or perhaps even Beauxbatons to protect his family.

Below them, Angelina went running off, presumably to get a professor.

An idea hit Hermione. Grabbing a startled Hala's hand, she pulled her through the shocked and frantic crowd. "Come on, we have to get to the field." Finally they broke through, running down the stairs as they possibly could.

Ron, George, and Fred were arguing with Cosmas and Damian, both of whom were mounted on the brooms to go after their brother.

"We have to go up there! I'm not going to let my brother die!" Cosmas yelled, trying to shrug off George's arm.

"He's only thirty feet in the air. There's a chance that he'll survive. If you go up there, the person who's jinxing the broom will make it go higher, increasing his chance of dying." Ron said, trying to get the boy to see reason.

"The only thing we can do is stay on the ground and hope to catch him before he falls." George added. Cosmas stopped fighting, realizing the truth in the older boys' words.

"Where's Angelina?" Ron looked around for the older girl.

"She's gone to get Madam Hooch or the first professor she sees." Hala moved over to her brothers, eyes on Shyamal's figure as he tried to stay on the bucking broom.

Hermione ran up to her best friend. "Ron, give me your broom."

"Why?"

"Because I'm going to Banish it to him." Understanding, Ron handed over his broom to Hermione just as Shyamal was flipped over the broom handle, dangling by his fingers, legs hanging in the open air. Hermione pulled out her wand from beneath her robes. With a flick of her wand and quickly muttered incantation, the broom rocketed in the air, speeding toward Shyamal.

A second later, the broom Shyamal was holding on to gave way, Shyamal letting go.

He twisted in mid air, his hand flashing out.

Panic rose in Hermione; she changed the path of the broom to fly down, angling to cross Shyamal's path. As it rushed past, Shyamal was able to hook a leg and arm around it.

Relief flooded through her, the pulsing of her heart slowly returning to normal.

"Good one, Hermione!" Ginny yelled as they started running toward Shyamal who was heading back to them. Hermione was barely able to stand upright as both George and Fred pounded her on her back.

"That's Gryffindor's brilliant witch."

Cosmas and Damian were running up to Shyamal as he landed. The broom haired boy waved them off. "I'm fine, just suffering from an adrenaline rush."

"What do you think you were doing?" Hala started face turning bright red with anger. "I knew what you were doing. You saw that Snitch right below you and you let go."

"She reminds me of mum." Fred whispered as Hala continued to yell at Shyamal who was just staring at her, a muscle twitching in his jaw.

"What is going on here?" The group turned to see Angelina leading Professor McGonagall and Madam Hooch to them. "Mr. Suha, are you alright?" The Gryffindors had followed the two professors, keeping a distance away but close enough to hear the conversation between them.

"Yes, professor, as much as I can be after being yelled at by my sister."

"How did you get down?"

"Ms. Granger helped me by Banishing a broom up to me as I fell. Thanks for that, by the way."

"We believe someone was jinxing the broom." Ron told her. "The broom was acting up like when Potter was attacked four years ago."

McGonagall's lips pursed as Hooch gasped. "Are you sure, Mr. Weasley? Why would anyone want to jinx the broom? No offense meant to you, Mr. Suha."

"None taken."

Madam Hooch waved her wand, Shyamal's broom heading toward her. "The only way to find out for sure, Minerva, is to test the broom for anything." She looked at it. "There isn't anything out of the ordinary about the broom except for the fact that it is one of the older ones. There can be a chance that it was old and finally broke down."

"What about the tryouts?" Someone asked, the Gryffindor crowd bustling at that. Edward Potter was standing outside of the circle, glaring at Shyamal with unconcealed hate. Shyamal ignored him, focusing on the professors before him.

"Professor?" Angelina looked up at her Head of House. She received a nod. The Gryffindor captain whispered a spell, summoning all of the Snitches back. Out of the ten now hovering in front of her, three red and another six silver, the rest their usual gold. "It looks like Shyamal is the new Gryffindor Seeker." The rest of her words were drowned out as the Gryffindors yelled.

Shyamal was immediately set upon by everyone, each want to talk to him.

A bang sounded, freezing everyone.

McGonagall looked at everyone. "If everyone here goes back to their dormitories, I would like to speak to Mr. Suha in my office, unless of course, the try outs are not over?"

"The Seekers were the last ones." Angelina told her, getting her clipboard from George.

"Mr. Suha if you please. Oh, Ms. Granger, ten points for your quick thinking and excellent use of the Banishment charm." Shyamal and his siblings followed Professor McGonagall up to her office. She sat at her spot as they took seats in red plush chairs before the oak desk. "Do you mind telling me what happened on the Quidditch pitch, Mr. Suha?"

Shyamal took a moment to gather his thoughts before speaking. "Everything was running smoothly until just after I caught the fifth Snitch. The broom started bucking on its own and no matter I how much I tried to regain control, it bucked even more. Finally it was able to flip me over the broom handle. I was trying to find a way to get back on it when I was able to catch a glimpse of the broom Hermione had sent to me."

"What about the reason why your sister was screaming at you?"

A blush appeared on Shyamal's face as Hala snuffed in anger, turning away from her older brother. "She was able to see me catch the sixth Snitch. She's mad about it."

"I see." McGonagall didn't say anything for a moment. "Is there anything that has happened to the school that I don't know about?"

"Not really. Just a slight misunderstanding with Mr. Potter. It was in regards to something personal about Hala." Might as well as come across as a polite boy.

McGonagall's face hardened. "Hogwarts does not look down favorably upon fighting between students. If there are anymore

uncivil interactions between you and Mr. Potter, I will be forced to take points from my own House and assign you detention."

"We haven't had any altercations since then."

"Do you know if there any other student who may take offense against you?"

"No, ma'am." The others shook their heads. "At least none that we are aware of. Though I'm sure there are a quite a few people that take interest in the fact that we are from Durmstrang which is not a favorable school here with its reputation."

"The school is on edge now after the events that have occurred several months ago with the loss of one of our own. If anything happens that concerns you or threatens your siblings in anyway, you can come to me or one of the other professors here. You can be rest assured that Headmaster Dumbledore will take care of it."

"Of course, Professor." They were about to leave when McGonagall spoke again.

"Now, you wouldn't by chance know about the jinxes placed on the fifth floor corridor regarding the Transfiguration of students into kittens and such?"

The library was silent, the barely audible scratches of quills against paper and the rustling of parchment and books were the only things breaking it. Madam Pince was in her corner of the library deftly looking over books that had been carelessly torn or needed extensive restoration. Shyamal passed the dozens of aisles of ancient tomes and books, looking for his sister.

Ever since yesterday, she had been quiet, deftly ignoring him or sending him heated glares when she caught sight of him staring at her throughout the day. He knew it was because of what happened at the Quidditch tryouts but didn't exactly know why. He paused when he caught sight of familiar dark brown hair down in a high ponytail. Readjusting his bag, he walked over to her. Hala looked up at him, eyes narrowing in anger before looking back down at her essay, writing a few more words furiously.

Keeping his voice down in a whisper, Shyamal leaned toward her. "Hala, we need to talk." Another line was written down. "I know it's about the tryouts but I don't understand why-"

"Of course you don't." She hissed back, hand tightening on the quill. Shyamal could see the beginning of bright red blush forming around her face.

"Then tell me why."

"No I don't have to."

"Yes, you do. I am your big brother and guardian."

"Oh, now you remember." Shyamal was startled at the sarcastic tone in her voice.

"I always remember-" He started.

"Did you remember when you decided to go after that stupid Snitch?" Hala asked, her head finally snapping up to glare at him. Her voice was in a low but forced whisper. "You were dangling 30 bloody feet in the air with your broom acting up and you decided to let go?" The last word was dripping with something Shyamal couldn't quite put his finger on. "What would have happened if you died, Shyamal? We don't have anyone left to take care of us. We would have been placed under someone's care and probably broken up since hardly anyone can take in three children who are going to Hogwarts. They wouldn't have left us to go back to Romania. And all for what? Just to show Edward up? Would it have been bloody worth it to leave us behind?" Hala spat at him, gathering her books and shoving them into her book bag, she left, sending one last glare at him.

Shyamal rubbed at his face, feeling an unknown weight crushing down on him. So that's what had been bothering Hala.

She felt like Shyamal had left them just like Edward had done. And both for stupid reasons.

"She still hasn't forgiven you for catching that last Snitch?" Ginny was standing in front of him, an armload of books in her arms and a

battered quill tucked behind her ear. "I saw you guys fighting while I was down the aisle. She seemed pretty angry enough."

"Sure I was thinking about it but I wouldn't have really down it." Shyamal groaned. "The broom had already begun to fall when I did. There's was not point on holding onto a broom that was falling. Plus I had seen the second broom Hermione sent heading for me out of the corner of my eye. I just decided to catch the Snitch while I was in freefall."

"I never accused you." Ginny set her books on the table, taking a seat across from Shyamal. "Can I tell you something?"

Shyamal opened his arms. "Go ahead and slam me with both Bludgers."

He received a wry grin. "As being a last child who happens to be a girl, I can tell you she's afraid. Ah, let me finish." Shyamal closed his mouth. "Hala doesn't want to be seen as weak. She's angry at you for even thinking that you were going to risk everything for a Snitch and at herself for being so afraid of losing you. Since all four of you lost your parents, you are all she has left. You're the older brother and her father, the man that she could count on to there and to protect her if it comes down to it. But yesterday, she realized you're not invincible as she first thought, that she can lose you at any time like her parents. Now she can't stop thinking that what would happen if she did."

Shyamal looked at his hands. He hadn't thought about that. He was ashamed that he hadn't seen that earlier. He had always prided himself on being there for his siblings. When did he forget that? When we bloody came here to Hogwarts and saw Edward."How did you get so mature?"

"I have six older brothers, any of which I could lose at any moment if what Potter tells is true. And that's not including my parents." She paused. "I had to grow up after the incident in my first year. Made me realize a lot, things that I've never considered before. To me, Voldemort was just a nightmare in the dark, nothing substantial until I stumbled on his diary."

Hearing her mention her first year, Shyamal's anger sparked at what happened after, the image of a thirteen-year-old Edward touching a

twelve-year-old Ginny burning in his mind's eye. Clenching his jaw, he shoved it away. It wasn't his place and he had a feeling if he did anything about it, Ginny would take offense at it as she wasn't the type of girl to let a man fight for her. "I guess. I'll have to wait for Hala's anger to subside. She's still spitting fire at me and won't even think of listening to me."

"She'll come around. You might want to get her some chocolate."

"I hope so. I would hate to lose my sister after this." Shyamal raked a hand through his hair. "So is there anything that I should know about regarding the other three House teams?"

Ginny leaned forward and began bringing him up to date on the stats, abilities, and weakness of the players on the Slytherin, Hufflepuff, and Ravenclaw teams.

"The Dark Lord will look to increase the boundaries of your grand kingdom, my liege. He knows that before the Blood Elves were forced back into the Carpathians, your lands were vast and wide." The silky voice of the Death Eater was loud in the silent halls, the lords and ladies of all of the high houses sitting quietly in the shadows along the walls. King Shahriar studied the being before him, refusing to call him a man.

Standing tall, he was covered from head to foot in black robes, a white skull mask covering his features. He knew the purpose was not only to intimidate but to hide his identity from everyone if one should run to the ministry and turn him in for the prize money. The other two men were dressed the same, though one was definitely shorter than the other and was rounder.

"All you would have to do is join the Dark Lord."

Shahriar leaned forward on his throne, the silver chainmail he was wearing crinkling slightly. "Bowing to the Dark Lord is not favorable for me and how I would know that he will be able to fulfill his promise of greater wealth and more land for my kingdom and my people? All we have is his word and sadly that is not enough."

The speaker for the Dark Lord paused, Shahriar able to see that he was searching for a way to appease to him. "Surely you must know how the English Ministry has denied the return of my Master. They

are nothing but fools and will fall the moment Lord Voldemort attacks. With your might joined with his, our victory will be assured."

Akane spoke up then. "Your Master was defeated by a mere infant who is now grown into his fifteenth year. If he couldn't destroy the Potter Heir then, what makes you think he can defeat him now when he has come into his own?"

"You underestimate the Dark Lord. He knows more than what he did then and is much stronger for it." The wizard's fingers caressed his wand. "The boy will be no threat soon."

"We have heard your request for an alliance. As of now, we have no definite answer. Return in one lunar month and you will get it then. May Ceridwen look down on you fairly on your journey home." The Death Eaters bowed as one before being escorted out by a squad of Elven warriors. The moment the large oak doors slammed shut behind them, another squad of Elven warriors were roaming through the room with spells and incantations, searching for anything.

A couple of them weaved and drew on more power until finally the squad leader nodded toward his king. "A few spells that would have recorded what was spoken here have been found. All have been tweaked to record only mundane speeches and such. They will be monitored you command to remove them, King Shahriar."

A Lord on Shahriar's right snorted with disgust. "They dare come here and request for an alliance while they scout on us?"

"They are pureblooded fools." Whispered another. "They have no common decency among them. Why should we join them?"

Shahriar raised a hand, the murmurs and whispers ending. "We must decide whether the Blood Elves will join in this war or remain neutral as it has in the last one and for millennia."

A young Lord shook his head. "Why should we join when it is obvious the foolish humans refuse to defend themselves? We have heard that they have been alerted by those who have fought in the last war that this so-called Dark Lord has returned and yet they do nothing but stick their heads in the sand."

"I must agree, Shahriar, with Lord Merari. We have seen the young boys and have heard how their family of light neglected and believe them to be traitors. They do not understand that Dark does not mean Evil."

Akane stood. "We cannot afford to stand back and watch innocents die. If their Ministry cannot protect who will?"

"I must disagree, Princess. They cannot come to us every time a new Dark Lord arises and have our own people slaughtered while they cower behind their little wards." Lord Merari banged his fist on his chair. "I have seen the same images as you and was disgusted by their cattle mentality. They have the choice to be wolves or sheep and sadly, they have chosen the latter."

"The humans have lost their sense of responsibility. Look at those who have not wielded magic for millennia. Even now, the Great Mother cries in pain from the devastation wrought upon her as they build their harmful machines and wage war with one another until the fields are red with blood. Look what happened fifty years ago when they dropped that weapon of chaos on two cities. How many died then and how many die now?" Cried out an elder Lord, his blood red hair streaked with silver.

"And that is why we must interfere with this war. We have our own sense of responsibility to this realm and theirs for all of us are entwined by the Great Mother. If their world falls, so will ours." Akane looked at her father. "But I see what you all are saying and thinking. I ask that our armies prepare for possible war. Perhaps we should send a treaty to Dumbledore and the English Minister to help them fight back."

Shahriar rested his arm on the throne, gazing at his daughter. "I have sent scouts to the office of the English Minister and I must say that he is quite an unfit individual for the upcoming war if it must come down to it. I have yet to receive word from Shyamal which leads me to believe that post from Hogwarts maybe monitored. The campaign against Dumbledore is wielding favorable results for the Minister, one that may do more harm now than good."

"Then I will go, Father, and keep Shyamal updated. You know how personally this is for him as his brother is the Boy Who Lived and mortal enemy of Lord Voldemort." Akane pleaded with her father.

"I will need you here, Akane. You are the commander of my forces out there and thus cannot risk you. The Ministry consider our kind to be Dark creatures and they will harm you if possible."

"Then I will go, Father." Every head turned to the great doors to see an Elf standing there. "I have returned when the news of the war beginning to brew reached the Southern Borders."

"Brother." Akane rushed to her younger brother, embracing him warmly. "I have missed you ever since you moved."

"We just saw each other last month, Akane."

"Too long when I used to see the Suha children every day, Owain." Akane huffed.

An elder Lord coughed. "Perhaps we should stick to matters at hand. I'm sure your celebration can hold for a later time."

"Lord Fannar is right. Owain, what did you say when you arrived?"

Owain glanced between his father and sister. "Akane is held to her duties here but as the youngest, I can journey into England and act as a messenger for all parties-"

"But brother, you have not been trained as deep in war."

"Akane, you are forgetting that we are Blood Elves. Hogwarts is surrounded on all sides of pure wild forest that the students rarely enter. They are only monitored the wards of Hogwarts. I am sure I can keep easily there."

"It is too risky." Akane started.

"I am trained to defend myself and I'm sure that the guard Father will send me will be more than adequate."

"How did you know I will send a guard with you?"

"Father, you are highly protective. I believe everyone who saw you with the Suha siblings will attest to that." The Lords chuckled around them.

"Ah, well, what do the Lords say?"

"Before we engage ourselves fully into the war, I must ask that the Ministry change their stance." Lord Fannar stately replied. "Lord Merari brings up a strong point. If we are to enter into an alliance, our allies must be willing to fight for themselves." Murmurs of agreement surrounded them.

"So, mote it be. Owain, you will leave for Hogwarts Castle in three days with three guards with you, one of which will return to notify me of your safe journey. I cannot stress enough that the Ministry does not find out that the Blood Elves have been travelling past our ancient boundaries much less into another country."

Owain bowed. "Of course, Father."

"The Lords are dismissed." Shahriar waved his hand, leaning back in his throne as both of his children approached him. As the last Lord left, the guards inside followed them out, closing the door behind them. "Akane, I know how close you are to the Suha siblings but you must understand the position the Blood Elves are on this. Ever since the turning of the wizards and witches, we have retreated back to our homelands, foregoing any further contact with them. It has been thus for centuries."

"Father, you know Lord Voldemort is taking the time the Ministry is giving him to recruit beyond the English boundaries. There have been reports of Death Eaters visiting the Giants in the bare lands of Russia and the werewolf packs in the Carpathians to the north."

"The Ministry look upon our kind as Dark Creatures. If they could, they would have persecuted us already, Akane. The Romanian Ministry has been very lenient in keeping to the treaty set long ago."

"I am sure they are dealing with any Death Eaters caught on their lands." Owain said. "Lord Voldemort will not risk any chance of the foreign Ministries coming down on him and exposing him to the English public. As long as he keeps his dark claws inside the English border they will not interfere."

"So they will let him recruit into their own country."

"Plausible deniability and they don't have to carry the burden of responsibility. At least, not until they murder an innocent or commit a foul crime on foreign lands, of which I am sure they will not do." Shahriar turned to his son. "I will assign two of Miroslav's best students and one of Eachann's best Riders."

"I will make sure to not let myself be captured."

"That is all I can ask you to do, Owain. These are very delicate times."

## Chapter Ten- Memories

It was Friday and Hala still hadn't talked to Shyamal, choosing to ignore him or speak in barely civil tones. As it was, Shyamal was beginning to worry that Hala would never forgive him.

When they had been taken in by King Shahriar and his family, Hala had been secure that Shyamal would never leave them, always being there if they called for him. Something that Edward did not do on that August night. Time after time, Shyamal had proved that right, coming to Cosmas' need when he had been lost in the forest and later when Hala had been bucked off her Seraphina or when Damian had accidentally made a potion wrong. When she wanted to play in the creeks, he took her. When Damian and Cosmas wanted to run, Shyamal would already be shifting, letting them race through the Carpathian forests.

He was their big brother, their protector.

It all shattered when she realized what he was thinking as he hung from the broom stick. It didn't matter that he didn't do it; it mattered that he had been entertaining the thought to get one up on Edward by risking his life and leaving all of them behind.

Her head bowed further as she moved faster along the halls, hands tightening around her books.

And then, the bloody git had the audacity to try and justify himself? That he remembered he had three other siblings who doted on him. That only made it worse. That he had balanced out their safety and the opportunity to win Edward's spot with the latter winning out in the end. She sniffled. She would NOT cry, no matter how much she wanted to.

The next thing Hala knew, she was on the floor, her books scattering everywhere. Hala climbed back to her feet, eyes, already searching for her items. "Sorry. Didn't see where I was going."

"You should be, you filthy little mud blood." She looked up to see a pale faced boy glaring down at her, fury written all over his face. On either side of him, two big students stood wearing the colors of Slytherin, no doubt his goons. "You should watch were you are you

going or haven't you been taught like a normal human being?" The great buffoons guffawed at the barb, Hala getting red in the face.

"First off, I'm not a mud blood. Second, I believe part of the blame is on you. Third, I take back my apology as it will be undoubtedly wasted on the likes of you." The slight jab was obvious enough that the two boys cracked their knuckles, looking menacing at her as the boy smirked.

The boy drew himself up to his full height, puffing out his chest. "I am Draco Malfoy, fifth year Slytherin Prefect and leader of the Inquisitorial Squad-"

"Never heard of it." Hala Summoned her books, interrupting the prat. "Now, if you excuse me, I have better things to do such as heading for my class." She was stopped by Draco grabbing her arm as she attempted to pass on by.

"You should learn to respect your superiors." Draco hissed.

"Well, then, I don't have to worry in regards to you." Hala's head flew back as Draco's hand lashed out from nowhere, smacking her against her cheek.

"That's for the disrespect, mud blood." Draco raised it again.

A jet of red light struck him in the chest, missing Hala by millimeters. The Slytherin Prefect flew backward, skidding down the corridor five feet, his wand rocketing the other way. Before the other two could draw their wands, they too were struck in the chest. No one noticed that one of the portraits emptied of its occupants, no doubt going for a professor.

Hala was startled to feel another pair of hands touch her. Her eyes fell on the concerned face of her brother. "Are you alright?" Shyamal touched her reddening cheek, anger building up on his face. "Did they touch you?"

"Just one slap and a hard grip." She saw his eyes darken as his eyes flicked toward the boys who were climbing back to their feet.

"He slapped you?" Shyamal glared at the leader.

"You'll regret hexing me. Once Umbridge learns of this, you will pay." The pale faced boy snarled, grey eyes flicking to where his wand lay.

"You touched my sister. Come on." But before she could even take a step away, the short pudgy Ministry worker was walking toward them.

"Mr. Suha!"

"Bloody hell." Shyamal cursed under his breath. "Yes, professor?" His emotionless mask falling into place before the woman.

"Did you attack a student?" Her beady eyes locked on to him, wide lips forming an ugly smile.

"For touching my sister inappropriately; I won't have her slapped by another student." Shyamal answered. He groaned when Professor McGonagall also appeared.

McGonagall's eyebrow rose at seeing him there, no doubt thinking of what they talked about on Monday after the Quidditch tryouts. "Madam Umbridge, I will take over here since you cannot punish students for misbehaving."

The smile on Umbridge's face widened gleefully. "I must disagree, Professor McGonagall. I just received this notification from the Minister himself." She handed a letter to the Transfiguration professor, Shyamal catching a glimpse of the Ministry seal on the bottom right. "I can now by Ministry decree remove or add points to Houses and assign detentions, which has been removed from the Deputy Headmistress along with some other duties from the Headmaster."

"What about this Inquisitorial Squad?" Hala spoke up, remembering what Malfoy had said minutes before.

Umbridge's smile was sickening. "The Inquisitorial squad reports directly to me. They will have the same powers as the Prefects except their word is higher. They will report to me as I am the High Inquisitor."

McGonagall's nostrils flared in barely controlled anger. Shyamal didn't think that Umbridge noticed it or rather the consequences of that anger if McGonagall would ever be able to leash it upon the smaller woman. "I must protest, Madam Umbridge. The House system has been in place for centuries."

"The Ministry no longer believes this system to be efficient, Minerva." Umbridge turned to Shyamal who was standing quietly next to Hala, eyes hooded. "Now, for attacking a student, Mr. Suha you will be assigned detention with me. As you have practice on Friday night, I expect you to be at my office Saturday night at 8pm. Are we clear?"

"Perfectly clear."

"Good. I look forward to you then. As for you, Mr. Malfoy, it would be prudent if such fine students as yourselves report to your class." Draco nodded glumly, sending Shyamal a death glare who knew what it was; a promise of payback later.

Shyamal grabbed Hala's hand, leading her away from that corridor where the two professors were staring at each other, the three Slytherins going the other way. Once they were out of earshot, Shyamal opened a classroom and beckoned Hala in. "What were you doing in that corridor?"

"I was heading for my Charms class."

"Your Charms class is one floor below and you were moving up." Shyamal moved closer to her, eyes taking on a look that made Hala unable to look away. "Please, Hala, tell me what's wrong. I can't do anything until you tell me."

She stiffened her jaw, unwilling to say anything. Minutes passed. Hala stood there, refusing to say anything and letting her eyes roam around the room but steadily ignoring Shyamal. Finally after a short time, Shyamal's patience ran out. "You know what? You can have it your way." Shyamal turned around, hand reaching for the door. "Have it your way."

He was leaving again, her mind cried. Don't let him go! "Shyamal! No, don't go, please!" She lunged at her oldest brother, almost tackling him against the wall. "Don't go."

"What do you want me to do, Hala? You're expecting me to fix this thing but I can't if you don't tell me what I did wrong? I'm not a mind reader."

Hala looked at her hands, wringing the hem of her top between her fingers. "You remembered that you had two brothers and a sister depending on you for their safety and care. When it came down to it, beating Edward won over us-" The words caught in her throat, tears starting to trickle over her cheeks. "You chose that over me and it hurt."

Shyamal was shocked. Sure, Ginny had told him this but to him, it didn't seem that much of a big deal. His arms went around her as her hastily constructed walls broke under the emotional strain on the twelve year old girl. "I'm so sorry, Hala. I didn't know." He murmured into her hair, rubbing her back and arms as she cried into his shirt. "I wasn't thinking. I'm so sorry." He rocked his sister back and forth, murmuring apologies into her long hair.

After a while, she quieted, head tucked under his chin, hands gripping onto his robes for dear life, believing if she let him go for a second, he would disappear without a word.

"What made you do it?"

Confusion clouded Shyamal's mind. "Do what?"

Made you think about getting the Snitch rather than finding a safe way to get off that wild broom."

He was quiet for a moment, gathering his thoughts. "A number of factors, I guess. I would be lying if I said that I did it because I know how skilled I am at flying and it come easily." Shyamal's hand stopped moving. "I think the most urging thought was the fact that I wanted to prove to whomever was watching that I can do something right. That I had more talent than Edward and more daring."

"You don't have to prove anything to anyone that you're good at something Shyamal. Especially not to us." Hala looked up at him, seeing him looking off at a wall but not seeing it.

Cocking his head, he looked at her. "It's a need in me, Hala, something that I had since longer than I can remember. The Sorting Hat saw that and wanted to put me into Slytherin, the formal House of the Ambitious. For a second during Monday, that need was stronger than the need to make sure the three of you were safe."

"Will it happen again?" She asked in a child-like voice.

"It's a good bet to say yes. I don't know when or if it'll be soon or later but it will. I can only hope that you forgive me after you're done knocking some sense into me."

Hala gave him a watery smile. "Sure." Shyamal stood up, helping his sister to her feet and picking up their things from the floor. As he slipped his book bag over his shoulder, Hala kissed him on the cheek. "Thanks."

"It shouldn't have been needed."

She shrugged, her hand going to her check to cover the bruise with a glamour charm. Shyamal made a note to give her the healing balm later that night. "We have our moments."

"Come on, we've probably missed two class periods. I'm sure Snape will love taking more points off me for missing the morning class." Shyamal groaned, seeing the time.

Friday night, Shyamal reported to Umbridge's office at the moment she assigned, knowing probably what she wanted.

"Mr. Suha, thank you for coming so promptly." Umbridge sat at her desk, a large steaming teapot sitting next to her on a silver platter with two small teacups. "If you would take a seat please, we can get to the matter at hand."

He sat down on the large comfy chair, resting his hands on the rests. "You asked Fudge to pass a new Decree giving you the power to assign detention."

The ugly smile was back on the DADA professor's face. "Of course, how else would I be able to get you to come to your assigned detentions without arousing suspicion from other groups?"

"What else was in that Decree? I haven't seen it yet in the Daily Prophet."

"Besides granting the power of a normal professor here, it allows me to create the Inquisitorial Squad, trustworthy students who will be willing to carry out my orders despite the objections from the other staff members. As you have seen, Draco Malfoy is the leader of that group. He does not know you are the spy in Gryffindor Tower so he will be treating your group as any other."

"If he touches any of my siblings, it will be my right to punish him."

"As long as he is not damaged too poorly to not return to classes; I need him." Umbridge waved off the warning. "I am sure that his father will raise objections, however, to your mistreatment of him."

"As long as we are clear on that, I do not care."

The smile widened. "Good, this brings me to another point of the Decree. I have sole power of who shall be expelled or suspended from Hogwarts, something that Dumbledore will no longer be able to do."

Shyamal's eyes narrowed. "You are not concerned with Draco's health and I will refuse to go as far as to maim him permanently, why would you need that?" Realization dawned in him even though he stopped it from spreading to his face. "You want to expel Potter."

"That would be a benefit but most importantly I want to teach Potter a lesson about upsetting the fragile balance in our precious world. I cannot do that if he was expelled. He must be taught." Her voice was fierce, a wild look coming into her eyes. "Yes, he must be taught along with his blood traitor father and mud blood mother." The slightly in control woman didn't notice the involuntary tightening of Shyamal's fingers. "They have been allowed too much free reign in our world and must be taught their place."

"What would you have me do?"

"Engage Potter in fights and I will be allowed to assign him detention where I can teach him." Umbridge's eyes flicked to the side of her desk. He could see a single thin black quill on there with a sharp tip.

It was an illegal Blood Quill. "He will learn and it also will allow you to report to me."

"You are asking me to threaten my stance with the rest of the school?"

"Mr. Suha, you must see that for me to do something for you, I must get something in return. Obviously Mrs. Potter has been instructing her son to keep a cool head and to not speak in the presence of others.

"Would explain in the sudden shift of his personality."

"Yes, something we can't have. I would like for you to engage him, to push him over the edge of his control. He already seems to despise your very presence."

"It's because I refuse to bow down to an obviously spoiled Potter brat. Would his parents' withdraw him from the school if these fights were to continue? And what about the Hogwarts staff and Dumbledore?"

"The Potters will not remove their boy as Dumbledore dotes greatly on him. As for your stance, Dumbledore can do nothing." Umbridge pour herself some tea, giggling somewhat girlishly. "You are now stuck in these grounds unless you are to withdraw yourself form Hogwarts to go back to your home in Romania."

The way Shyamal heard it made him think if he were to leave, Umbridge would find a way for him to be detained and perhaps thrown into prison for any number of suspicious acts that would threaten the safety of Britain's citizens. "Be assured that I will not leave. I will find a way to engage Potter as you say but nothing harmful. Can't have the Golden Boy dying on me."

"That would be correct."

An hour later, Shyamal left Umbridge's office, shielding his hand from the Hufflepuff Prefect who was making her way down the corridor on her shift.

High above the world, the Sun burned brightly, the day warm and breezy. It being Saturday, the students were out of class, quite a few

taking advantage of the day to go strolling on the Hogwarts grounds. A few groups were even in the water, wetting their feet as they studied by the edge of the lake.

The sight of the growing teenagers enjoying the day warmed Dumbledore's heart.

Young lives still carrying a fleck of childhood innocence.

He also knew that once they left Hogwarts a final time, they would be forced to enter a new and demanding world and in the process lose that final shred of their childhood.

His thoughts came back to the issue he had been brooding over. Last night, Dumbledore had visited the Medi-witch that had taken care of young Harry when he was born. She had readily given him the memory of that night and agreed to be Obliviated so she would not remember the meeting with Dumbledore before he left.

The vial sat on his desk, next to the Pensieve, mocking him with the sparkle from the sunlight, the memory swirling gently inside.

Picking it up, the headmaster uncorked the vial and poured the memory into the Pensieve. After a moment's hesitation, Dumbledore stuck his head in. . . . finding himself in the Maternity Ward at St. Mungo's. A red-faced Lily was in the stirrups already, a hand gripping the rails while the other was clasped tightly around James' hand, her husband standing nervously next to the bed.

A senior Medi-wizard was sitting in front of Lily's open gown, monitoring the arrival of Edward Sirius Potter. "His head is almost free. Mrs. Potter, just one more push."

"WE'RE NEVER DOING THIS AGAIN!" Lily screamed, grunting in pain as she gave a final push. Edward's bloodied head slid free, the baby wailing in discomfort as he fell into the waiting hands of the Medi-wizard. Another Medi-witch hustled forward, taking the wailing infant as the one in charge directed James into cutting the umbilical cord with a severing charm. The newborn was then taken to another curtained section of the ward for weighing and preliminary checks.

"Time of birth; 11:56 on July 31st." The Medi-witch taking care of Edward stated, another taking down the time.

Lily screamed again, the labor pains coming back. Her hand tightened reflexively, James wincing as the pain transferred up his nerves. "So help me, Merlin, YOU ARE NOT TOUCHING ME AGAIN!" More curses and profanities fell from Lily's usually clean mouth.

"Good, your second son is coming along nicely." Already the baby's bloodied black hair could be seen as he crowned. "Push." The Medi-wizard coached. Dumbledore could see Lily draw up on her will power for another. Three minutes later, Harry James Potter slid free, the headmaster freezing the memory in place as his feet left the birth canal.

With some trepidation, he looked at the clock and almost collapsed from horror at the revelation.

The clock on the wall read 11:59 with the hand counting the seconds just right before the 12; a second before midnight.

Three boys born as the seventh month died. The last candidate actually being born as the final seconds ticked away.

The memory started again, Lily fainting from the delivery, James panicking, Medi-wizards and witches running around, the second Potter child carried off. It wasn't until five minutes later that the Medi-witch recording the births had noticed no time of birth had been recorded on file for Harry Potter.

The Medi-witch who had taken Harry was heard saying it had been cool to see a child born at midnight exactly, like she had been. She never told anyone that she hadn't been paying attention to the clock, watching the chaotic bustle around Lily Potter instead. Later when she was asked if she was sure that the boy had been born on August 1st, she said yes, never knowing the consequences of her bias and of her negligence.

The memory turned silver, Albus being dumped back into his office.

Shakily, the headmaster sat in his chair, realizing the consequences of that night and of his decision a year and a half later. On that night, Dumbledore had discarded the idea of Harry being a choice as he

had been born on August 1st, the eighth month. By default, Edward had been the obvious answer at the time.

He had played the chances, a 50-50 chance of getting the right boy.

Had he lost?

Edward had shown signs of being a powerful wizard, producing a Patronus that was able to hold off dementors in his third year when Pettigrew had escaped and tried to kill him before disappearing back into the depths of the world. The report from Azkaban had determined that the anti-Animagus charm not been replaced on his cell. At the time, Dumbledore had seen the great amounts of raw power that Edward had, knowing once that reserve had been mastered, Edward would be one of the most powerful wizards for the forces of light.

Harry on the other hand during the few times Albus had seen him, no evidence of the boy had presented itself. The boy had been quiet, shy little boy. He had been playing with his younger siblings the one-time Albus had entered into the second story. That was until Albus had been informed James had caught Harry playing with a snake, speaking to it in parseltongue. The snake had disappeared with Harry telling James he had been wondering if he could keep it so he and his younger siblings can play with. After that, James and Lily had restricted their time outside, something that Albus had agreed with.

Then when the older boys were barely ten years old, the Death Eaters had attacked Godric's Hollow. Edward had claimed later that Harry had lured him, Daniel, Jonathon, and Evangeline Potter outside to go play by the creek which James had told them was off limits. Daniel and Jonathon had been the first to go down, attacked viciously by werewolves and dragged away, presumably dead. Edward had tried to use a spell that Remus Lupin had taught him, on his training wand but to no success. Evangeline was taken by another Death Eater soon after that.

Alone, Edward had run back to Godric's Hollow, trying to keep ahead of the Death Eaters. Once he had passed the ward, James had been alerted by the activation of the ancient wards when the vicious spells the Death Eaters had been casting landed on them. Soon, the Order and Auror members had Apparated on the

boundaries, immediately engaging on the Death Eaters who were still looking for Edward. Kingsley Shacklebolt had seen Harry going with the lead Death Eater as the Dark force retreated back. A second gang of Death Eaters were later found who also retreated immediately.

Lily and James had been distraught. For the months following the attack, the Auror and Magical Law Enforcement departments had searched tirelessly for any signs of Evangeline Potter, following lead after lead. By the end of the first month, the leads had dried up after leading to nowhere. Three months later, hardly anyone believed the youngest Potter was still alive. The end of the first year saw the hopes of the remaining Potters disappearing. The second year saw the official declaration of death of Evangeline Grace Potter.

But if the facts of Harry's birth were wrong than what else was wrong?

Albus upended the memory back into its vial, sealing the precious container with a flick of his wand. Gently, he placed it in his desk, making sure anyone but he and James would be able to open it.

Kingsley's memory of seeing Harry had been enough along with the ability to speak parseltongue that he had been identified as a traitor and a Dark wizard. Now with everything in doubt and the possibility of Harry being the Boy Who Lived, Albus would have to go and look over every shred of evidence to find the real truth.

And if this information was to fall in the wrong hands, then Cornelius would have his way. Already, James was under suspicion from the Minister in regards to his loyalty. This was why James had told Edward to keep the events of that night to himself. He wondered if that was the right action now. During the few weeks after the horrible ending of the Triwizard Tournament, Cornelius had been dragging the Potters name and his own through the dragon covered mud in the attempts to destroy their credibility.

No, Albus would have to wait until the right time.

If there ever would be.

Off the Southeast coast of Vietnam, lay a few islands, uninhabited by humans. In the few sparse trees, a large woven nest lay, nestled

among the branches. Sitting upon this nest was a black phoenix, her long glossy neck stretched out as she plucked more feathers from her chest to have her partner weave it into the nest.

Fawkes, Dumbledore's red phoenix, was sitting on a branch close to the nest, keeping guard.

In years past the two was nearly as inseparable as their Bonded. Until that day when their world had exploded in a maelstrom of light and whistles. That night, the black phoenix had become unbounded, losing her name and identity when her Bonded had shifted onto a course phoenixes despised. That moment, she had lost her chosen while Fawkes' chosen was set on a course to duel his one time friend, leading to the darkened man's defeat.

It had been so long.

Fawkes had stayed with his Bonded through the years. Always yearning for the mate he had lost. Most Bonded phoenix left the realm where Earth resided to go back to their ancestral home. The beautiful bird had thought Zora had done the same. It had been a surprise when he had been flying around the Hogwarts and had heard her trill.

Now, here they were, sitting on a nest together, expecting.

The phoenix once called Zora shifted, lifting herself to peak at the egg underneath her. Nestled among the moss Fawkes had recovered was coppery-red egg, as large as an ostrich. Even in the pre dawn light, the two parents could see the glowing aura as it pulsed from within the new life. A new fire burning inside, pulsing gently with a heart far away even though the boy did not know it yet.

The black phoenix settled again, trilling softly as she preened her mate's flight feathers. With a trill of his own, Fawkes flamed off, appearing a second later in Dumbledore's office, watching the old man sitting at his desk as he stared at his empty Penseive.

## Chapter Eleven- Broomsticks and Duels

"I'm not going to let you copy." Damian ignored the puppy eyes Cosmas was giving him from across the table. "No, Cosmas. You had how long to write it?" He shoved his brother back into his seat, pulling his parchment closer to himself. The four Suha children were sitting with Hermione, Ron, and Ginny in the Gryffindor Common room, working on assignments that were due that week. Shyamal was reading up on Potions as he hadn't really focused on it when they were with the Blood Elves.

Just that morning, Umbridge had announced that the Inquisitorial Squad would now be patrolling the halls of the school, the students having been hand-chosen by Umbridge herself. The students had instantly recognized that the entire Squad was from Slytherin House, Draco Malfoy being the leader. Even though the day was already ending, quite a few points had already been taken from the other three Houses, with Gryffindor dropping from first to last within a span of twelve hours.

To say the Gryffindor Common room had a depressing air about it was an understatement.

"Fine, I had seven days but come on we had that Quidditch tryout on Monday. How about I write it and you correct it?" Cosmas finally giving in after twenty minutes of wheedling with no results and seeing the glare Shyamal and Hermione had given him.

"I can do that." The older twin turned the page in his History book.  
"When did Professor Binns die?"

"A long time ago." Cosmas thumped his own copy down on the table, causing the ink pots and items on it to rattle. "Probably around the time of Grindalwald from what I hear."

"Huh, I could have sworn it might be longer than that as he just focuses on the real ancient stuff from the 1600's." Cosmas flipped a page. "They need to get a new teacher that's more up on the modern history or at the very least make it more interesting."

"Why don't you try talking to him after class?" Cosmas stopped for a moment, his mind going off on a tangent. "How does a ghost read

our essays when he can't touch anything physically?" The twins looked at each other. "But he does use his notes so I guess he's corporeal enough to grade them."

Shyamal blanked out the twins debating on how Binns could carry out his responsibilities as a professor when he was a ghost, trying to focus on who to properly create a Bone Inflammation Potion, which was used to treat individuals suffering from inflammation in the joints and bones. Movement from the corner of his eye had him turning to the right. Stepping toward the bulletin board with a single determined purpose was Angelina Johnson, a parchment in her hand. As everyone noticed her, the Gryffindor Common Room went silent, eyes following from afar.

Angelina took her time, walking up there. She slowly unfurled the parchment, placing the pins into the top and bottom very languidly. It seemed like an eternity for the Quidditch captain to go back up into the girls' dorms.

The moment her cloak swept around the corner, the Quidditch hopefuls stampeded to the board, bustling over one another to get there first. Groans and small cheers sounded from the packed space, even one Gryffindor jumping up onto the closest table and taking bows as he announced he was one of the Reserve Chasers.

"Yeah, I got onto the Reserve team!" A young girl squealed, hugging her friends.

"Damn, I didn't place at all."

"The veterans made it through."

"That's favoritism." Shyamal craned his neck over the crowd to see Cormac McLaggen turning red as he stared at the parchment, jabbing his finger into it as if it were going to change the name.

"Angelina had a talk with Professor McGonagall. Be glad that you made the Reserve." Hermione called out, not removing her eyes from her book.

"You only defend him because he's your boyfriend."

"He's not my boyfriend. Ron is my best friend."

Shyamal stood up, facing off against McLaggen before Ron could do anything. "If you can't handle the fact that another slid past you, then go complain to McGonagall. Otherwise, if you're just going to stand there and insult a Gryffindor Prefect while whining about the fact that you came in second, I suggest you shut your mouth and sit down." McLaggen's best mate grabbed him by the arm, dragging him over to the opposite corner, whispering into his ear the whole time.

"We actually have a shot for the Quidditch cup." A first year gushed, jumping up and down on his feet.

"The Slytherins are going to be gob smacked. Even Umbridge can't touch that."

A young Gryffindor walked up to Shyamal, hesitantly talking to him. "Congratulations on winning the spot for starting Seeker." She blushed as Shyamal looked at her in surprise before running away back to her spot in the unofficial first year corner.

"I think Shyamal has an admirer." Cosmas laughed, dodging the splatter of ink Shyamal gave him with a flick of his finger. "I need to get my robes cleaned again. Thanks." The group laughed as another younger student came up to the group, congratulating the Suha twins on making the Reserves and Ginny on snatching the last spot as a Reserve Chaser.

Leaning around the latest fan, Shyamal gained his siblings attention. "Would you mind coming up to the fifth year dorms?"

"You can't go up the girls' staircase." Hermione called out. "It'll turn into a slide. Ron tried that in second year. Didn't even make it to the first year girls' dorms."

"Oh." Hala's eyes widened. "Does it happen on the boys' side?"

Hermione continued on. "The girls can go into the boys' dorms. For some reason the Founders believed that the boys were untrustworthy while can girls be more trustworthy with their privileges."

"That's quite unfair." Cosmas muttered, finishing his first paragraph. He capped the inkpot, standing up as he did so. "I'll finish this later."

"You'll forget about it." Damian warned, drying his own essay and rolling it carefully. "Binns let you pass on the last time because you're a new student." Cosmas just waved him off.

"I only want to show them something in the boys' dormitory, Hermione. Something I don't want the others to see just yet." Shyamal got up, placing his books in his bag as he wouldn't be coming down. "It'll be quick." Hala closed her copy of Advanced Transfiguration and followed Shyamal up, the twins a minute later.

"You do know that I have an exam for Potions even though Cosmas doesn't care."

Cosmas snorted. "How come you didn't get Sorted into Ravenclaw? You would be brilliant for that House, literally."

His twin shrugged. "It wanted to but I liked Gryffindor better."

"You just didn't want to be separated from me." Cosmas dodged the elbow Damian tried to dig into his side. "You don't want to be alone from your darling little brother."

"Don't make me throw you over the banister." They bickered up the rest of the way, Damian denying the accusation he didn't want to be separated from Cosmas.

The group walked out onto the fifth year landing. The dorm were Shyamal was sleeping in was completely empty except for the slumbering plant Neville had placed on the window sill, its pale sea green leaves trembling lightly as soft snoring noise came from it. Kneeling before his trunk, Shyamal inserted his key into it and as he turned it, nonverbally casted the counter password. The locked clicked open.

He pulled out a box and stood before his siblings who immediately recognized the logo on the top. Opening it, he removed something from the inside and setting the box carefully aside. A nonverbal spell later, the item was held in his hands, fully restored to its original length.

Hala squealed in delight as both Cosmas and Damian muttered curses at it. All three of them were drooling at the item in Shyamal's hands.

It was a real, good to honest Firebolt.

Shyamal lightly threw it to Damian who caught it and held it reverently. Another couple of reaches into the box and both Cosmas and Hala were holding theirs.

"When did you get them?" Hala traced the line running from the glittering handle to the straight and tightly packed birch twigs in the tail. The word 'Firebolt' was imprinted in gold across the head, the hand-printed registration number underneath. She stared at the super fine ash handle, eyes unfocused on the numbers. Hala could feel it vibrating with barely leashed energy as if it were eager to zoom off into the horizon. She let it go, the broom instantly hovering over her hands. "Bloody hell."

"When we were Diagon Alley." Shyamal answered, his eyes flicking from the broom to Damian who was gaping at him now.

"But we didn't make the team." Cosmas stated. "It's pointless."

"Doesn't matter. How long has it been since we had a flyby together?" Shyamal shrugged. "At the very least, consider it an early Christmas present."

"Oh yeah." Cosmas piped up. "Let's have a nighttime flyby."

Shyamal smirked. "You still have that essay to finish." Cosmas could only groan in despair, ignoring the laughs from his brothers and sister.

The Great Hall had been renovated for the Dueling Club by Monday night. The candles that had floated over the four House tables had been raised another eight feet while their flames were now burning hotter. The tables themselves had disappeared, leaving a more open area for the students to use. A long platform had been raised in the center, three feet off the ground so the students could see. Another platform was located where the Head table would have been, a little higher than the central platform. As the students funneled in, they could already see Professor Black there and

behind him, a slightly older looking man stood, dressed in shaggy robes and Professor Snape standing stoically on the other side.

Shyamal's group moved to the center of the room, next to the platform, talking excitedly about what they were expecting. Ron and Hermione had just finished telling them about their experiences with Lockhart and Snape, detailing how the latter embarrassed the former greatly. In the end, it turned out Lockhart hardly knew anything of the Dark Arts and their Defenses.

"It can't be as bad as Lockhart's Club. That one was a complete disaster." Ron described, using his hands. "The git didn't know anything about fighting or spells in general. Only knew how to accidentally vanish a person's arm."

"I would think a best-selling author would know some spells to fight." Damian replied, looking unsure of what to think.

"You would think so but we found out later that Lockhart knew only how to use the Memory Charm. He wiped out a number of people's memories and used them to garner his own reputation. When he used Ron's broken wand at the end of the year, it backfired on him, causing him to lose his own memory. He's in St. Mungo's now." Hermione shrugged at Damian's shocked expression. "It was why we didn't learn anything in that year as well. He was clueless as to what he was doing."

"Oh, look who's here." Cosmas nodded toward the doors and the group turned to see Edward walking in, slinking along the wall until he was before the teachers' platform. Inwardly, Shyamal bristled at the smiles he received from the two adults.

"I heard he's taking private lessons with Black." Neville Longbottom was there behind them, a shy expression on his face as he looked at his feet. "When I'm coming in from the green houses, I see him entering Black's office. Luna from Ravenclaw told me that Dumbledore as ordered Black to teach him advanced spells and fighting techniques." The group traded glances.

"No doubt it's for the battle against Voldemort." Shyamal muttered. He turned back to the platform, seeing Lupin kneeling near the edge to talk to Edward. You would think they would take the time to train him more efficiently once he arrived here at Hogwarts in his first

year. Why would Dumbledore wait so long to train him? Why wait now when Voldemort has returned and is at full strength?

A bang went off, everyone's attention jumping to Black. "Welcome to the first meeting of the Dueling Club here at Hogwarts. The reason for this student organization is to go further into the lessons given in the Defense Against the Dark Arts classes. You will not have homework here and are not obliged to practice the spells outside of the classroom or in study time. However, you will not waste my time, Professor Snape's nor Mr. Lupin's with some silly little wand movement. This will be a serious practice session. Is that clear?"

The attentive audience nodded. "School rules will be obeyed here. You will not endanger your fellow students nor threaten them. Unforgivables are not allowed and any use of Dark spells will be reported to Headmaster Dumbledore for punishment. You will follow my instructions and those of the Hogwarts staff present here. When we say stop, you will stop."

"Now, as this is the first meeting we will start off with the practice of the spells given to you in class, namely the Disarming spell and the Shield Charm. You have given me essays on them so the practical use should be fairly easy."

"Now, each region has different techniques on fighting. Some emphasize sheer raw power behind the spells. Others emphasize cunning and strategy and yet even more emphasize speed and agility in casting." Black lectured as he paced the floor. "Here we will teach you how to use what you know to a maximal use. Due to the inconsistent teaching methods here the past decade, we will try to teach you to use the limited amount of spells you know to your advantage."

Some of the audience shifted nervously. A hand raised in the air, the Ravenclaw bouncing on her feet to get Black's attention. "Can we have a demonstration of techniques? The only demonstration we have seen was the short duel between Professor Snape and Lockhart three years ago, if you could even call it a duel." At the mention of the past duel, Snape's lips curled into a small smug smile.

"I agree with Ms. Brocklehurst." Snape stepped forward, eyes flicking through the crowd until it landed on Shyamal who stared back. "We do have a Durmstrang student here who can adequately

represent the styles of such a prestigious school if I'm not mistaken." Shyamal ground his teeth, knowing instantly Snape was up to something.

I wonder what he's doing. He wouldn't bring up my fighting skills and it wasn't adequate. I'm sure I kicked three of his students' backsides when they tried to touch my sister. Shyamal thought savagely. If I'm adequate, than I wonder what Malfoy is. Shyamal was just as shocked as the rest of the audience when Snape continued speaking.

"How about a duel between him and Potter?" Gasps sounded as the students moved even more restlessly.

"I do not think that's a good idea, Professor Snape." The sarcasm was evident in the words, dripping with hate. Black was staring intently at the Potions Master. "Edward is a fifth year as well as-

"He has been receiving private lessons under your tutelage. Why not show how much he knows in a test of skill and cunning? It would be an opportunity to see where he stands in his lessons." Snape interjected. "Unless of course, you doubt he can handle the danger of one single student." The Potions Master looking pointedly at the Boy Who Lived.

"I can take him on!" Edward yelled, stepping forward from the shadows. The urge to bang his head against a wall rose up in Shyamal who looked at his brother. "I know enough to fight him and win."

Oh, no you don't. I've been taught by Blood Elves in both magical and physical fighting techniques. Too bad you didn't get mom's intelligence. Shyamal thought. Or maybe just inherited too much of the older Potter's recklessness.

"Edward, you've only started taking lessons this year." Black looked beseechingly to Lupin who was moving toward his godson. Lupin bent down to talk to him, whispering furiously.

The hairs on the back of Shyamal's neck rose. Subtly, he looked around and spotted Umbridge standing just barely in the entrance to the Great Hall. She was looking pointedly at him and Edward.

Grabbing the wolf by the ears. Shyamal thought. What in Merlin's name made me come here? Or rather, what made me dance with the bloody she-devil? Stepping forward, he looked at Black. "I wouldn't mind taking part in a duel, Professor Black. You are quite right that different regions emphasize different techniques. If Black doesn't want to endanger Potter, I'm sure you can find a suitable opponent-

"Which would be Potter as he is our Triwizard Champion. I believe that Potter is a suitable opponent by any one's standards." Snape sneered at Edward who flushed a deep red. Ignoring his godfather, he catapulted on the platform, glaring hatefully at Shyamal who eased himself up. "I believe dueling rules apply?"

Black could see this was out of his hands with both students unwilling to back down. Hiding his hate at Snape, he nodded to the combatants. "Same rules as stated earlier. First to be disarmed loses." Edward fell into an offensive stance while Shyamal took a defensive one. "On my count; three, two, one, GO!"

Edward was the first one to cast as Shyamal was unwilling to take the first shoot even though he wanted to wound his older brother's ego. "Avis Oppugno!" A flock of brown eagles flew from Edward's wand. The crowd gasped when the dozen or so birds dive-bombed, claws stretched out for attack as they fell toward Shyamal's uncovered face.

"Serpensortia!" A large black rattle snake dropped before the flock, interrupting their dive bombing. Rearing back, it sunk its long fangs into the closest bird and throwing it away before snatching another one. The flock dispersed, flying up into the rafters. The snake reared back, its hood opening as it hissed at Edward, slithering closer.

Edward stepped forward and said something low enough for Shyamal not to hear it. The snake slithered forward, snapping its jaws at the startled boy. As Edward sent a Severing charm that the snake dodged, Shyamal flicked his wand. "Stupefy!"

"Protego!" The scarlet jet ricocheted off Edward's shield, landing on the snake that didn't move fast enough, disappearing in a puff of dark green smoke. Edward dropped the shield, sweeping his wand in a wide arc. "Deprimo!"

A powerful gust of wind swept the platform, the students close to it yelling and shrieking as it passed over them. Shyamal brought up his own shield as the gust rippled past it, forcing Shyamal back a few feet.

Back and forth, the two traded curses, hexes, jinxes, and spells, trying to break through the other's shield. Shyamal was struggling not to use any more of the advance and Dark spells he knew as the moment he did, Dumbledore would be alerted and in the present situation, it would be a worst case scenario. As it was, he was surprised Edward had learned so much in a few short weeks what took others much longer to learn.

Guess they've been teaching him at a fast pace. Shyamal thought to himself, dodging a Body Bind curse. No one can that learn that many in a couple of weeks. Only one way to take him down. Using the focusing techniques the Blood Elves had taught him, Shyamal started to concentrate his magic in his arm, dodging the stinging hexes, Disarming charms, and Stupefying spells coming at him from the other side. The moment came when he saw Edward falling into a lull to draw breath and to ease his aching muscles, balancing precariously on the edge of the dueling platform. Shyamal twisted his body around, his arm sweeping up in a slashing movement and releasing his spell, his magic speeding down his arm and out of his wand.

"Confundo!" The extra powerful jet of magic struck Edward right in the chest, shattering his hastily casted shield charm, the boy unable to dodge anywhere as he had been balanced on the very edge of the platform. Confused and vulnerable, he couldn't dodge Shyamal's next spell. "Levicorpus!"

The room exploded in laughter as Edward's ankle was gripped by an invisible hook, jerking up into the air. His robes fell down around his face; a swath of pale white skin was exposed as his shirt fell around his armpits. Jeers from the Slytherins were thrown at Edward as the boy struggled to shift the black layers of clothing from his face. "Accio wand!" Edward's wand rocketed into Shyamal's outstretched hand from where it had fallen when Edward had been hoisted into the air. Flicking his wand, Edward was raised even higher to the jeering crowd.

"So much for the Golden Boy!" A Slytherin called, inciting more laughter from the crowd.

"Not so big are you now, Potter?"

"That is ENOUGH!" Professor Black bellowed, the room quieting immediately.

"Liberacorpus!" Shyamal caught Edward before he could slam into the platform, lowering him gently. Turning to the Slytherin who had spoken first, he looked at him. "Would you like to duel or would you rather prefer to hide among your slimy companions?" A few snickers were heard from the Gryffindors as the boy flushed red but kept his mouth shut. "Thought so; worse than Potter I have to say." Shyamal jumped off the platform after handing Edward's wand to Lupin, watching Snape out of the corner of his eye.

The Potions Master had an unreadable expression on his face but Shyamal could read the glee burning brightly in his dark eyes. Edward had regained his feet, Black helping him up.

"That was bloody brilliant!" Ron breathed, bouncing on his feet. "Where did you learn to duel like that?"

"Durmstrang as Snape put it. Our teachers don't settle for adequate or even above average. They want us to be the best." Shyamal answered quietly.

"I don't know if Potter qualifies as such." Ron muttered.

"That's because Snape offered him up for slaughter." Shyamal nodded his head toward Umbridge who was walking steadily up to the platform, the students quickly getting out of her way.

"Hem, hem, Professor Black, I must speak with you."

"Can't you see that I'm busy at the moment, Madam Umbridge?" The anger in Black's voice could be heard. It looked like he was ready to explode.

"I'm afraid that this deals with the Dueling Club." She handed a rolled up parchment to Black who unrolled it. The assembled students watched as Black's face reddened.

"What's the meaning of this?"

"Just as it states, Professor Black. Any and all student organizations, study groups, Quidditch teams, and such are hereby disbanded unless given permission by me. Any student found to be in direct violation of this Decree will be expelled." Umbridge sweetly said, patting her hair.

"Students, you are dismissed. Head back to your dormitories." Black roared, his anger boiling over. Lupin moved to him, placing a calming hand on his shoulder even as Umbridge flashed him a look of pure disgust. Snape also stepped up to Umbridge and began speaking with her.

"Oh, didn't see that one coming." Hermione said, as they followed the Gryffindors back to the Common room. "Should have though as it seems pretty obvious now. It was pretty doubtful that Umbridge would let Professor Black get one over her."

"Foresight is 20-20." Ron remarked, shooing off another Gryffindor who was creeping up on Shyamal to gawk at him.

"Man, what I would give to be in there just to see Black yelling at her. He seemed pretty ticked off there at the end." Damian noted. He looked over at Shyamal. "He might come after you, Shyamal, as he's protective of his friends and family. Shyamal?" He nudged his brother who started. "Are you okay?"

"Huh? Oh, yeah, I'm fine. Why don't you guys go on? I need a breather after that duel." Shyamal waved his hands. "Go on, I'm fine."

"If you're sure." Cosmas started.

"I'm fine. Go." Ron shrugged and led the group up. Shyamal walked down another hallway. A few seconds later he was on the stone bridge leading to the green houses, looking out into the small canyon that was between the castle and the Forbidden Forest, the Black lake just peeking through the incoming mists.

"You were holding back." Startled, Shyamal turned back to see Ginny standing there.

"What?"

"You were holding back when you were dueling Potter. I could tell." Ginny joined him, resting her arms on the stone ledge, leaning out just a bit. "Also, I have a feeling if you really dueled; you would have kicked his bloody arse back to Godric's Hollow."

Shyamal snorted. "Maybe. Potter is a better dueler than what I thought him to be." They fell into silence. A lone bird somewhere called out, the distorted sounds echoing in the mists. Already, the night was beginning to encroach upon the day, the eastern sky a deep purple and the western a blood red color as the final lines of the Sun disappeared. A breeze gently swept past the bridge, bringing with it a scent of green and musky earth and the clean smell of rain water.

Shyamal peeked over at Ginny. The red strands of hair not caught up in her ponytail gently bounced in the breeze, riding the currents. Ginny turned to him. Shyamal blushed and turned back to the canyon. "What?"

"Nothing. Just thinking."

"About what?"

"Nothing." He paused. "Everything. You were right that I was holding back."

"Why were you holding back?"

Shyamal cocked his head to look at her. "I came here to protect my siblings. I don't think it's in their best interest if I kicked Dumbledore's Golden Boy in front of the whole student population. Still did it anyway. I already have Umbridge on me. Don't need the rest of Hogwarts too."

"You can't help it. There something about you that draws people to you." Ginny stopped. "I think it's the fact that you're mysterious as you've suddenly popped up from Durmstrang which most people think is a Dark school."

"People fear what they don't understand and let's face it, if it's foreign, they don't understand the culture."

"True. Ron was like that. Not one to upset the status quo but he's changed. Got a shock with Potter as that boy could be just as arrogant as any Slytherin."

"What about you?"

Ginny was quiet for a second. "I guess I thought the same but the incident with the Chamber changed me in more ways than one. Not only have I lost my innocence at that time but also some beliefs as well. Like what makes something Dark or Evil. Being Dark doesn't make one Evil just as Light isn't always good. Reminds me of a muggle book that I found once. I remember reading the quote that the Darkness may hide things in the shadows but the Light can also blind a person when they look directly into it. Now that I've seen and been inside the thoughts of a truly Evil person, I can tell the difference."

"Hmm, I can empathize with that since I'm from Durmstrang. I heard some wacky tales from the students who came here last year. How some people were naturally distrusting from them, especially after they sat at the Slytherin table, refused to mingle with the Durmstrang students." Shyamal paused. "Anyway, now that everyone knows I kicked Edward's arse, I'm sure people are going to be afraid of me. After all he is the Savior of the Wizarding world."

Ginny laughed. "Or they just might rejoice in you knocking him down a few pegs. Come on, I'm sure the rest of Gryffindor Tower is waiting for your remarkable return."

Shyamal snorted. "Right." But following the redhead back into the castle.

The cheer when he entered the Gryffindor Common room was deafening with the noticeable absence of one particular boy noticed by Shyamal. When he went to bed, Shyamal was smiling in his pillow.

## Chapter Twelve- Pieces Falling into Place

"Damn, a couple of weeks of not grooming and they get knots the size of Russia." Cosmas moaned, trying to gently brush out the knots in Radomir's coat. When they had first seen the Seraphinas, they had believed that the fire that made up the feathers, mane, and tail were tongues of real flame flickering out of the skin. Master Eachann had sat them down one day, before Shyamal was start the riding training and told them about the Seraphinas.

The so called flames weren't actually flames in the since of the word but rather it was more of the living energy in the steed. It could actually be used as a self-defense mechanism that would actually 'burn' the person who was attempting to ride the Seraphina, leaving wounds on the magical core of the person if they had one. In the mating season, the mare would breed with the stallion that had the strongest and brightest fires.

The only reason why the Blood Elves were able to ride the Seraphinas was that the fiery steeds were hunted for their hooves, the material used in various expensive potions, and meat, which was a delicacy in some foreign countries. The herds in Romania currently were guarded by the laws held by the Romanian Ministry and by the Blood Elves themselves. The Seraphinas had noticed the protections given freely by the Elves and so allowed them to ride them.

"It's getting close to winter so you know their winter coat is growing in." Shyamal said, running his brush over Isocrates' thickly muscled neck. The steed snorted, munching on the barley in the trough. Already, most of Isocrates' coat was gleaming under the sun.

Radomir whinnied, stomping his feet as Cosmas accidentally snagged some hairs on the brush. "Sorry, boy." He rubbed the spot, knowing the steed could hold a grudge and make him pay for it. "I heard that some Gryffindors overheard Edward complaining to his dad and his mom."

Shyamal groaned. "Black's already mad at me for embarrassing him. Do you know if Potter's father going to come down on me?"

Cosmas shrugged. "Don't know."

"For trying to fit into the student population for safety reasons, we're not doing a good job of that." Damian gave Radomil one last brush before putting the tool away in his satchel. "So far, you've put up wands with Draco Malfoy, one of the head Slytherins, and Potter."

"You've also been pulling pranks. Granted, they're not as grand as the Weasleys who seem to be in a class of their own, but pranks are attention grabbing."

"Tell me about it. Damian and I were sleeping on sleeping with our faces against the ceiling yesterday. They had cast floating charms." Shyamal had seen that as he couldn't miss both of his brothers swimming through the air, trying to reach him before he left Gryffindor Tower for breakfast. The first few attempts of trying to get them down had caused various parts of their bodies to change color.

While his siblings laughed, Shyamal felt something brush up against his senses, familiar and calming. Keeping an eye as Cosmas chased Hala around the edge of the paddock, he throughout out his magical aura, searching for the party heading toward them. Damian caught sight of the smile on his older brother's face.

"What's up Shyamal?"

"We have an old friend about to arrive."

"I see you have not forgotten your training, Shyamal." Owain stepped out from the shadows of the Forbidden Forest, garbed from head to foot in traditional wood toned clothing. His bright red hair was tucked under a dark green hood. From his waist, hung an Elven short sword while an Elven long bow was slung across his back. "My traveling companions are stationed on lookout."

"Owain what are you doing here?" Hala squealed as Cosmas finally grabbed her. All of them were continuing their movement, making it look to outsiders that nothing was happening where they were. Shyamal was sure a spectator up in the castle wouldn't be able to see Owain as his clothing helped him to blend in with the surrounding brush. "Last, I heard you were in the Southern Borders."

"You were correct, young Hala, until I heard from Father had not received word from you. Once I had recovered from my temporary

illness, I rode back to the palace. Akane wanted to be the one to come but you know if she gets hurt, the Elven Royal Houses will go berserk, so I came instead. On the way here, we have heard news of this- " Owain's face scrunched up in disgust. "Woman who is now the High Inquisitor."

"Oh, she's a lovely little short woman." Cosmas sarcastically laughed. "Resembled a pompous evil toad."

"She's been checking owl posts for any signs of treason. Even Shyamal's new owl, Hedwig was attacked as she flew around the castle to stretch her wings." Hala explained. "Even though he's her spy for Gryffindor Tower."

"Is that wise?" Owain leaned forward. "Shyamal, you may have been trained in stealth and tactics but spying is something else altogether."

"I have found that out now. She's been implying that if we were to leave Hogwarts, she would try to find a reason to imprison all of us. It may be due to the fact we're passing off as Durmstrang students. And since she has Minister Fudge in her pocket, she has almost absolute power."

"Do you want to leave?" The siblings traded glances, unsure of what to say. Owain sighed, almost knowing what they were thinking. "The longer you wait, the more likely you will be found out. If that happens, leaving here relatively unseen will no longer be possible."

"With all the attention we've garnered, the teachers have an interest in us already." Damian admitted. "Shyamal has already dueled Potter and stopped another student from taking advantage of his new position." Damian pulled one of Radomil's legs to him, checking the hoof for any bumps and deformities.

"That's not good. The situation has already become dangerous and precarious." Owain's face deepened into a frown. "They already know your button, I assume, Shyamal. All they would have to do is threaten one of your siblings and they will come down on you, whether it is the teachers or Umbridge, the Potters, or the students. You're not just missing with one wolf; you're messing around with at least four."

Shyamal swept a hand through his hair. "The moment we leave, I have a feeling that Umbridge will know. And I'm sure Mr. Potter won't just let our disappearance. Not after embarrassing his son in front of the whole school. He does have the whole Auror department behind him."

"We can't even leave if we wanted to." Hala said. "The students here are lambs to the slaughter. The more the Ministry keeps them in the dark, the greater the chance they'll die once they go out into the real world."

Shyamal looked at his sister. "You heard Hermione talking to me today in the morning."

"Well, you guys were talking near the girls' staircase. I'm surprised you didn't put up privacy charms."

"What are you guys talking about?" Cosmas asked curiously, giving Radomir one last stroke before beginning to pack up the grooming tools.

"She wanted me to start an illegal student group for DADA." Shyamal thought back to the moment when Hermione had pulled Shyamal off to the side before breakfast that day.

"I have something to ask you, Shyamal. Something really important." Hermione was looking around them suspiciously. The students were heading out of the Gryffindor Common Room, to go eat breakfast before classes started. A few were lounging around near the fireplace, trying to finish one last essay that had left for the last minute and was soon due.

He immediately tensed up, wondering what was on Hermione's mind that would be important enough or bad enough for her to pull him off to the side while being suspicious of her peers.

"Where did you learn how to duel like that?"

"I told you last night, Hermione. Durmstrang teaches students on dueling techniques, whether it be a gentlemen's duel or dirty and gritty."

Hermione bit her lip, looking worried about what she was going to ask next. "Do you think you'd be willing to teach a couple of students your skills?"

Shyamal froze for a second. Whatever he had been thinking, it was sure as hell wasn't that. "What exactly do you have in mind?"

Words started to spill from the fifth year Prefect, her hands slightly wringing in front of her. "The rest of the students in the other Houses are being picked on with most of the younger students falling prey to the Inquisitorial Squad. While I was out on patrol last night, I came upon a first year Hufflepuff that had been teased around with by Millicent Bulstrode from Slytherin. They need someone to teach them how to fight back and I know Umbridge is not going to do that."

"I don't think they'll learn from a Durmstrang student."

"That's because they don't know you. You're the best dueler I've seen here, better than Potter who's been trained by an Auror himself. Sirius Black is one of the best."

Shyamal looked out the window, seeing the morning Sun rising. "I don't know, Hermione. I can't risk the safety of my younger siblings. Umbridge has me in her sights, just like Potter, waiting for me to step out of line." Hermione's face fell, crushed by his denial to get involved. "I'm sorry. Perhaps you should ask Potter or maybe lead them yourself. You could be a leader, Hermione. Just because you read more doesn't make you a follower." He left her standing there, next to the window, looking after him as Ron came down the staircase with a sleepy Neville.

Shyamal told Owain and his siblings a brief summary of Hermione's idea of a DADA student group.

"It's dangerous, having a group of students learning how to duel effectively. The bigger the group, the greater the threat of discovery of the organization is, especially if you have a snitch among the group. Then there's the fact that you have to find a way to tell them all of the meeting time and the fact you have to search for an area that's big and secret enough to hold you all." Owain warned.

"I know but I'm planning to not do it. I've been hearing Hermione and Ron might."

"Why not?" Hala demanded, her Gryffindor side coming out. "That toad has attacked another student today, a Ravenclaw who had to be taken to the infirmary for a Calming Draught. We can't just let her take over the school." Cosmas and Damian nodded.

"Hala's right. Our safety is in danger if we let her have free reign. We need to keep her from coiling her rings around Hogwarts any tighter." Damian said quietly.

"Fine, I'll think about it." Shyamal shrugged off the feeling that the situation was rapidly spinning out of control. "It's getting late, we should be heading back."

Owain nodded. "If you need me, I will be in the forest near the centaur herd. They have allowed us to stay on the edge of their territory for the time being." They quickly said their goodbyes and the Blood Elf prince disappeared, blending into the shadows until his form disappeared.

It was now about three weeks before the first game of the year and Ginny had her stalker following her again. Edward had seemed to recover his overconfident attitude after the duel with Shyamal a week ago. As if to make up for the embarrassment, Edward became even more unbearable.

At least in her opinion.

"Potter, move out my way!" Ginny all but yelled, furious that the Golden Boy was back up to his usual tricks. Ever since Ron had hexed him in her second year, Edward had kept a good distance between him and her. But now, he was trailing her again, asking her to go out on a date with him to the Hogsmeade trip at the end of the week. "If you're any slower, we're going to be late for practice."

"Come on, Ginny, you know you want to go out with me." Edward said, his hazel eyes looking down at her, walking by her side. "You've had a crush on me for ages."

"Until I finally realized how foolish that crush was. The reality of it is much worse." Ginny retorted, her pace fast. "Why don't you go bother someone else who's willing to stoke your big ego?"

Edward danced in front of her. "You're acting just like my mum. She said the same thing about my dad and looked what happened. They've been married for over twenty years."

"A fact that still astonishes me." Ginny huffed when he moved in front of her again, pulling out her wand. "Don't make me hex you, Edward. We have to practice and I can't do it with you throwing yourself all over me. Why Angelina made you Reserve Seeker is beyond me." She murmured.

Edward tensed at the indirect mention of Shyamal. "Why do you hang out with that Dark Wizard, Weasley? He's not but trouble and dangerous. How many students has he already hexed during his stay here?"

"You're just mad that he beat you in a duel, got Malfoy good the next week after that when he decided to jump Shyamal, and that his brothers have made you their favorite target to prank." Ginny gave a small smile when she remembered the first practice the Gryffindor Quidditch teams had. Edward's Nimbus 2000 had been charmed to carry a small banner that unfurled behind him, stating the large words 'Bested by Suha' as he flew. Of course, the Weasleys did one better and had temporarily tattooed Potter with a miniature caricature of the duel in brilliant colors on his forehead. That one had taken a whole day to remove. "His reasons for attacking Malfoy were a sound one as the git was attacking his sister and him later on and your duel was during the first meeting. You're just mad that you fell for it."

They walked out on to the grounds, heading for the Quidditch pitch. "If I had known Snape knew Suha was a better dueler, than I wouldn't have. So you are going to go out with me?"

"The answer is no, Potter." Ginny opened the door to the dressing room, seeing Shyamal there, tugging off his robes and hanging them neatly in the Seeker locker. "Shyamal."

"Hey, Ginny." Shyamal gave a nod to Edward who was ignoring him. "Angelina's already on the field and running the starting Chasers on Ron. She wants to have a mock game today."

"Doesn't she always?" Ginny grumbled, removing her outer robes and putting on her Quidditch ones. She tied up her long red hair in a

braid. Edward was down the aisle further, putting on his Reserve robes. "Where are your brothers?"

"Fred and George took them to the other side to practice their aim since they have the strength."

"Temporary truce on the Quidditch field?"

"Wouldn't know but seeing as there hasn't been any bangs or screams, I would guess so." Shyamal slung his Firebolt over his shoulder. "See you on the field." He swept past Edward who looked pointedly away from him.

"I can't believe you talk to him."

"I've already told you, Potter, he's a close friend." More closer than you'll ever be. Ginny thought in her mind.

"You barely even know him!" Edward continued to hound her as they made their way up to the field, Shyamal talking to Fred, George, Cosmas, and Damian. Ron was too busy trying to protect the hoops from Angelina, Katie, and Alicia to pay attention to the ground. "Plus you're not going out with anyone and who's going to take you besides me?"

Anger exploded in Ginny. Turning around she jabbed her finger into his chest. "Just because I'm not going out with you doesn't mean another boy won't go out with me, you prat. I don't like you as a friend or as a boyfriend. So go find some other tweet to go out with you. Now leave me ALONE or I WILL hex you!" Ginny spun around and mounted her broom, kicking off into the air.

The wind blowing past her calmed her agitated nerves as she flew a couple of laps around the field. The only real spell she knew was the Bat-Bogey Hex and she had a feeling that Potter would learn the counter curse after the first time. She knew Hermione was planning on having a group meeting that would help students learn tactics in duels and such. Maybe it would be a good idea to join. That way, if Potter ever decided to go past certain lines, she would be ready. The first meeting was to take place in the Hog's Head down in Hogsmeade during the trip and she knew Neville was going.

Slowly the plan formed in her mind. She would have Neville escort her as a friend that way Edward would back off and both of them would join Hermione's group to learn how to duel. Finally decided, Ginny flew back to the middle of the field, throwing thoughts of Edward into the back of her mind, focusing on the mock game as it started.

A black robed figure appeared in the center of a Wizarding village, a bone white mask on. The difference, however, was the skull mask was fanged, the edges sloping into lupine features. Green eyes shone with a fierce light as the new comer raised his wand, whispering a dreaded curse.

The residents screamed as the Dark Mark rose into the sky, the giant snake blossoming from the ghastly skull's gaping jaws.

Jets of green light flashed in the night, tongues of angry orange and red flames flickering from collapsing houses.

## Chapter Thirteen: Dark Reality

Shyamal was rudely awakened by someone screaming.

He rolled out of bed, wand falling into his hand as he searched for the source of the screams. A thump sounded as Neville fell to the ground, his blankets coiled around his feet. Ron, Dean, and Seamus were climbing out from their beds, throwing the curtains around their beds back. Shyamal's eyes flicked to the last bed, the curtain unmoved and the source of the screams.

In five strides, Shyamal thrust the curtains back to see Edward convulsing slightly on top of the bed sheets, hands clasped tightly to his forehead, still caught in the throes of spasms. Ron took a peek over his shoulder, taking off in the next second to get Professor McGonagall.

"Potter! Wake up!" But Edward did respond, convulsing even harder as the attack strengthened in force, his back arching.

"What's wrong it him?" Dean asked in horror.

Shyamal didn't answer. He leaned over and gave him a shake. It didn't do anything. "Potter! It's a nightmare! Potter!" He shook harder but the boy still didn't respond. A dull ache began to build in Shyamal's head but he steadily ignored it.

"Do you think he's going to die?" Neville asked worriedly.

"No he's not." Shyamal stepped back raising his wand. "Aquamenti!" The jet of ice cold water struck Edward in the side of his face, the drop in temperature forcing him out of the vision. The teen rolled off the bed, spluttering as he tried to shake off the affects of the vision. Shyamal dropped to one knee next to him. "Potter, are you alright?"

"Don't fucking touch me!" Edward tried to stand but he fell limply against the side of the bed.

Shyamal wanted to say nothing but the steps clamoring up the stairs stopped him. A few second later Professors McGonagall, Dumbledore and Potter were bursting through into their dorm.

Already the noise had attracted the rest of the fifth year boys, quite a few trying to glimpse what was going on.

"Back to your dorms; Mr. Weasley, help the other prefects to herd all of them back to their respective dorms." McGonagall ordered briskly. Grumbles and moans could be heard as one by one the boys were forced back.

"Edward, are you alright?" Lily touched her son's wet face, searching for any sign of injury.

"Would someone like to explain what went on here?" Professor McGonagall said, her gaze going from one student to the next.

"We woke up when Potter began to scream. Shyamal was the first one there." Seamus reported, shifting nervously.

Shyamal stared at McGonagall. "When I opened his curtains, it looked like his forehead was bothering him as he was holding his hands tightly there. I tried to rouse him by shaking him slightly but he wouldn't stop screaming. I had to use a Water charm to get him out of whatever state he was in."

Dumbledore looked down on the boy being held by his mother. "It is anything you like to say, Mr. Potter?"

"Yes sir but not here. I need to talk to you in private." Edward whispered quietly. Shyamal's ears perked up at this but knew he couldn't say anything.

"Perhaps we should move this to the infirmary so Madam Pomfrey can look you over for anything injuries." Dumbledore said gravely, giving the Boy Who Lived a once over. Turning to the other boys, he addressed them. "I believe I don't have to stress of how important it is that none of you speak about this past this point." The five teens nodded. Dumbledore gave them one last look before leaving, the two professors and Edward following.

"Bloody hell, what do you think that was?" Dean asked all of them, eyes wide.

"Do you think he has a disease?"

"I don't think so, Neville." Shyamal went back to his bed. "Whatever it was, it's important for Dumbledore to know so it has to be something big. And we won't be able to solve it tonight so it would be best if we go to bed." The others took the hint, climbing back to theirs and closing the curtains.

Smoke was still rising from a number of burning ruins that had once been Wizarding homes just an hour before when James Potter appeared in the town center. The small village of a hundred wizards and residents had been razed almost to the ground, only a few building still left standing if not unscathed. Aurors and Hit-wizards were moving about the area, searching for any survivors and transporting the injured to St. Mungo's which had been alerted when the call came. Another squad was circling the perimeter, making sure that no muggle accidentally stumbled on them.

James dropped the used Portkey on the ground, searching for his Deputy Auror. Since Sirius was now teaching at Hogwarts, he had promoted Kingsley Shacklebolt to the position, knowing the man had a head about him as well as a large repertoire of spells and skills. It was an added bonus the man was also part of the Order of the Phoenix.

The dark-skinned man was speaking with two Senior Aurors, getting reports from their respective areas. As James neared them, he could start hearing snippets.

"-are you sure they knew who they were seeing?"

"The lady seems to be bloody positive." The tall built man said, his dirty blonde hair spilling over into his light brown eyes. "She swears on her mother's grave and is even willing to have an Obliviator come and take her memory as evidence."

"Kingsley." The three wizards turned to him, the two Senior Aurors paling slightly. "What's the news?"

Kingsley sighed. "At about 9 pm, a wizard in Death Eater robes appeared in the town center. Reports vary in the exact details but the basics are the same. He started to ignite the houses in the immediate vicinity, blasting down the wizards and witches that spilled out onto the streets. Even the dogs weren't spared. As of right now, the tally is thirty eight dead, fourteen in critical condition,

another eleven with injuries, and thirteen missing. The rest of the residents were able to flee as far as they're concerned, a couple of which have returned once the Dark wizard left when the Aurors responded. I have a team of Aurors checking for survivors that are still here."

"Do we know the identity of the Dark wizard and was it really only the one?" James' eyes roamed over the damage, knowing that even a group of the standard ten Death Eaters couldn't do this much damage, not even Bellatrix Lestrange. Maybe Voldemort but so far he was keeping a low profile. Would he really risk revealing himself to an ignorant public that still believed he was gone for good? His eyes snapped back when he saw the Senior Auror who was speaking before wince just slightly. "You know something."

The Senior Auror blinked, eyes flicking toward Kingsley who nodded. "The Dark wizard left one of his victims alive, presumably because of the arrival of the Auror response team. It seems he was toying around with her, enjoying in her pain. She says she can vividly remember the eyes, the emerald green eyes of her tormentor. She also states his voice sounded young, a teenager's voice. And that he was doing this was only one step towards the destruction of everything his brother holds dear."

James froze, instantly realizing the implications of the words. "She swears that the Dark wizard who did this is-?"

"Harry Potter." Kingsley whispered softly, knowing this would be hard on his friend and boss. He had seen his reactions when he had told the Order of seeing Harry disappearing with the group of Death Eaters who had killed his younger siblings. The man had flipped between a dark fury and numb denial. "It seems with everything happening, Harry Potter has finally decided to come back into the view of the public."

"He never was a Potter." James spat, an ugly taste filling his mouth. "I want that woman's memory and her testimony. Make sure nothing is tampered with it. I also want a breakdown of the timeline of this attack, the exact times he came here and when he left." The Senior Aurors nodded. "Escort the lady to the Department of MLE." With nods, the two left.

"Once Fudge finds about this, you'll know what he will do."

James swept a hand through his graying black locks. "I can't believe it. After all this time, he's been waiting." His eyes roamed over the ruins again. "This much power isn't possible for a normal fifteen year old boy."

"Not naturally, but with some Dark rituals yes, unless of course, he's another Voldemort or dark Dumbledore." Kingsley rubbed his chin. "They're smart. This is sure as going to smear your name through the mud, discrediting you even further if you don't handle this case right. If you try to pile this under other cases, the public will cry out that you're just trying to protect your blood. Then there is the fact that he is your son; someone that you will have to find, capture, and imprison, assuming he doesn't force you to kill him when you try to bring him in."

"He's not my son, Kingsley."

"You may think that, but as a father, your heart is telling you the opposite; caught holding the wolf by the ears, unable to let go."

"When did you become a philosopher?"

"Hmm, when I joined the Aurors."

Anymore jokes were interrupted when a house further down the street suddenly exploded, bits of wood and bricks flying through the air. Aurors and Hit-wizards quickly ran to the house, James and Kingsley following. The red flames sizzled as jets of water sprouted from dozens of wands. Inside, screaming could be heard, no doubt a victim caught inside. The fire burned, jumping back despite various *Aguamenti* charms, defying to be put out.

No matter how much they tried to move toward the building's screaming occupant, the fire grew back. After a few minutes, the screaming stopped, no doubt having died from the fire. Defeated, the Aurors and Hit-wizards watched the flames, preventing it from jumping to other buildings as it continued to burn.

"Kingsley?" His Deputy turned to him. "As of this moment, Harry Potter is Undesirable Number One." The grim face his friend did nothing but intensify the feelings inside of James.

When the Daily Prophet arrived the next morning, the school erupted in whispers and rumors. Shyamal saw Edward pale considerably out of the corner of his eye as Hermione read out loud from her copy.

"- the attack on the village Andiron, thirty-two miles North east of Bristol, has left forty seven dead, ten in critical condition with another seven injured and seventeen missing, including three victims who were killed when a booby-trapped house exploded. The remaining survivors have been taken to the Department of Magical Law Enforcement for their testimonies and protection while temporary safe havens are being searched for.

An informant inside the Auror Department has confidently stated the person who killed so many last night was none other than Harry Potter, the boy who mysteriously disappeared over five years on the night his younger siblings were brutally murdered by You-Know-Who's supporters. It was revealed that the second Potter child was in league with the Death Eaters and has since then not been seen.

Head Auror James Potter, as of this morning, has declared his estranged and Death Eater son, Harry Potter as Undesirable Number One, the highest decree for a wanted criminal. "In light of recent events, the Auror Department and the Department of the MLE seeks the immediate capture of Harry Potter." Hermione stopped, eyes sliding across the page. "They go on to talk about what happened in August 1990 and the last time anyone ever saw Harry Potter alive. It seems Fudge is stating the tragedy of the Triwizard Tournament and the death of Cedric Diggory is due to Harry Potter."

"Do they even have evidence to that fact?" Damian asked, eyebrow rising as he leaned over Hermione's shoulder.

"I don't see any concrete fact in this article, just really vague statements from the Minister." Hermione frowned. "They could be saying that to alienate the Potters even more. Who will listen to the family whose son helped to kill one of the best students at Hogwarts? The public will just believe that the Potters are trying to spread rumors that Voldemort is back to cover up their son's activities."

A look of disbelief crossed Ron's face. "Do you think that's possible? I mean, Auror Shacklebolt did say that Harry disappeared with the Death Eaters that night when his siblings were killed."

"What do you think, Shyamal?" Ginny asked, noticing the blank expression on the older student's face.

Shyamal sighed. "It is likely that Fudge is trying to cover his arse but without further evidence, I can't really say. With magic, the possibilities are quite endless."

"If the Dark wizard is Harry Potter, he's powerful." Seamus Finnegan noted, looking at the moving picture on the front of the page. "So much damage and all because of one Death Eater."

"That's way the war was so bloody during the first war." Hala stated, moving bits of eggs around on her plate. "Powerful wizards on both sides of war, so many deaths."

"But what if Voldemort is really back?" Neville quietly asked. "The Death Eaters would never try to attack Wizarding homes for fear of repercussions from the Auror Department. Now suddenly they're starting to become active. Four attacks within the past six years, three in the last year alone."

"The first attack was a group of them, numbering over thirty." Shyamal rested his head on his hands. "That was on the tenth birthday of Edward Potter. The activity at the World Cup started this, followed by the death of Diggory at the end of the Tournament, and now it's starting to look like the Death Eaters are coming back with this single Dark wizard causing so many deaths. Either they have found a new leader for the time being or Voldemort really is back."

"If it's a new leader, it could be Harry Potter."

Hermione shook her head at Dean. "I doubt it would be him. He's only fifteen, not old enough or knowledgeable enough in duels to lead a vicious group of wizards and witches. No, it has to be one of the older Death Eaters, someone who knows what they're doing. Harry Potter is just a supporter at this stage."

A dark expression crossed Neville's face. "It could be Bellatrix Lestrange. Remember, she did escape from Sirius Black and

Remus Lupin when they rescued my parents." Neville closed his eyes. "Everyone knows she's crazy and loyal to Voldemort to the point of fanaticism. She'll do anything."

"It's a good thing that both Lestrange brothers are in Azkaban." Ron muttered.

"It can't be Lucius Malfoy as he's still being watched by the Ministry and Potter. Same with the Goyles and Crabbes." People starting throwing out names, some quickly thrown away and others bounced around.

"Class is going to start soon. We won't be able to solve this anytime soon and neither will the Aurors unless the Death Eaters mess." Damian noted, rising from his seat. "I do have Snape today and I don't want to lose any more points for Gryffindor."

Ron snorted. "It's not like we can go below zero at this point."

"It's Umbridge. You never know." The group split, each heading for their respective classes. Shyamal followed Hermione up to Arithmancy while Ron started up the stairs for his Divination class with Edward right behind. On the way up, Shyamal could already hear rumors and heated murmurs dancing around.

Sitting through Arithmancy, Shyamal dully answered a few questions here and there. Hermione kept shooting him glances every few minutes as if knowing what he was thinking.

Which was the attack.

He pulled out his quill, ink bottle, and a scroll of parchment, taking down notes and bits of pertinent information from the lesson Professor Vector was giving.

What Voldemort was doing was simply ingenious.

By placing Harry Potter back into the national spotlight, he was forcing James Potter to deal with the threat of his own son raining destruction down on the Wizarding world. If he didn't, the rest of the public would believe that he was trying to protect his Death Eater son.

Shyamal could feel the resentment burning in the air from the rest of the school, quite a few sending Potter heated glares. While he was climbing the stairs he heard one whisper that Potter probably allowed his brother to kill Diggory.

Voldemort would not show the full scope of his army until his base was secure and stable. Whoever the imposter was would be sent again and again to keep the political pressure on James Potter and the Auror Department. There would be a chance that the public would demand the removal of Potter for fear the Head Auror would be partial to his second oldest child.

And there were the students of Hogwarts.

Teens who still did not know the world beyond the iron gates guarded by griffins that they would be going into once they left the school for the last time. Sheltered and hidden, they knew nothing of the real horrors of war. It was not to say they were not affected by it. Quite a number had lost relatives and friends during the First Wizarding War. But seeing the reality was so much more, to see a beloved friend fall under the claws of Dark werewolves or a relative's life being ended in a bright flash of green.

So much more final, the darker side of human nature.

Left, untrained, the teens that were wandering the halls of Hogwarts today would be like lambs to the slaughter, felled one by one until nothing was left of this generation. This was the fate the Ministry was condemning them to for fear of one single politician.

He could change it if he took it upon himself to train them whatever capacity he could. If they learned from him, maybe a couple would survive.

Why should he care about them?

They were nothing to him, just students that went to Hogwarts. People he saw in class every day.

The door to the classroom opened just then. Professor Dumbledore stepped in, followed closely by an Auror with a grim expression. "Professor, can you please excuse Ms. Jones. We need to speak to her."

The Hufflepuff girl in question paled, a hand drifting to her trembling white lips. "N-no, professor, please- tell me my family are okay." Professor Dumbledore's eyes saddened just enough for the message to become clear.

With a wail of despair, the girl collapsed from her chair, burying her face into her hands. Professor Vector rushed to her as the students looked at each other. "Class dismissed." Chairs screeched as they were shoved back, the students quickly putting their things away. No one dared to look at the distraught girl. The Headmaster and the Auror moved toward Ms. Jones, letting the students quickly file out the door.

Shyamal caught Hermione's eyes and nodded once.

He could feel the burden on his shoulders grow just a tad bit heavier.

It was Saturday and Shyamal found himself in Hogsmeade that weekend, sitting inside the dank bar of the Hog's Head. He had received special permission from McGonagall to bring Hala down with them, after hearing another Gryffindor ask her the same thing. It also helped that he was Hala's parental guardian.

"How many people are we looking at?" Shyamal rolled his neck around his shoulders, feeling the bones crack a bit.

Hermione frowned at him. "Just a couple. Nothing really big."

"How bad can it be?" Cosmas asked, clanking down the five butterbeers and a pint of sugared milk onto the table, handing them out. "Who would want to take defense lessons from a dark and evil Durmstrang student much less four of them?"

"So all of you can duel?" Hermione asked, sipping hers.

Evangeline reached for her pint of milk. She had given a fit of Shyamal not letting her sneak a butterbeer but had to give in. She had bartered for a pint of milk with an amount of sugar. She knew she was going to be hyper. Serves Shyamal right. Wait until next year when you're thirteen. She whispered sarcastically in her head. Sighing she answered Hermione. "Yup, not as advanced as

Shyamal, but we can duel at the basics. I just started last year so I only have a years experience compared to Shyamal's four.

Sunlight speared into the dank pub as the door opened, a rush of people coming in.

Shyamal was surprised to see Neville leading the group with Ginny on his arm, followed by Dean, Lavender, Seamus and the Patil twins from Gryffindor house. He did a double take to the Asian girl who came in with another nervous Ravenclaw girl. Dragging his eyes away, Shyamal counted about twenty six people heading toward them from the various houses besides Slytherin, which didn't surprise him much.

Cosmas wiped the dust off his butterbeer. "That looks more than a couple of people, Hermione."

The Gryffindor prefect blushed. "Well the idea was quite popular when I was talking to them."

Fred Weasley walked up to the stunned barman who had frozen in wiping the grime off one of his glasses. "Hello, there chap. We would like twenty six butterbeers." The barman threw down his rag, glaring the whole time he was retrieving the order. "Come on, I don't have enough money to pay for all these." Fred held out his hand to collect the money as he handed out the drinks.

"Ron, can you start getting more chairs?"

"The only problem now is how we are going to hide a group of thirty two people practicing DADA away from Umbridge. I don't she'll let us use a classroom for something mundane without her being there." Shyamal noted as the large group moved over to their table and began sitting down.

"We'll find out." Hermione whispered at him before turning to face the expectant faces around her. "Hi." The gathered teens stared at Hermione who slightly hesitated in her speech. "W-w-well, um, you know why we are here- Um, ever since the Inquisitorial squad appeared, they've, um, been commandeering the halls of Hogwarts and with that hogwash that Umbridge teaches, we can't really defend ourselves. And I for one will not let that happen" — "Hear, hear." A Ravenclaw boy said, Hermione giving him a brief smile

before continuing on slightly stronger than before — "I thought it was time that we, the students, took back the halls." A pause, Hermione glanced at Shyamal, who motioned with his drink to go on. "The only way we can do that is if we teach ourselves how to fight back."

"What about the OWLs? Those are coming up this year for us fifth years and you want to pass those too." Another Ravenclaw boy asked.

"I do want to pass the OWLs but now, learning DADA has taken on a whole new meaning. You saw what happened yesterday in the Daily Prophet. Once we leave Hogwarts, it's going to be a whole new and ugly world—" Hermione took a deep breath "especially now that there's a possibility that Voldemort is back."

Shyamal wanted to scream in frustration when he saw everyone react to the name. The girl who was with the Asian girl shrieked in horror, spilling some butterbeer all over herself. Neville tried to cover up his yelp by coughing into this hand. Most of them just simply winced or shuddered.

A blonde Hufflepuff spoke up. "Who said that Voldemort is back? Do you really believe Potter after what happened on Wednesday?"

Shyamal leaned forward aggressively, dark brown eyes flashing in warning. "Even you must see that a fifteen year old boy cannot come up with all the ideas behind these attacks. Someone with the experience, knowledge, who knows how to fight is behind all of them." He met the eyes of every single person sitting at the table. "It does not matter if it's Voldemort or another Death Eater. In the end, they are just as dangerous if not more so as they can blend into the ignorant public. And they are willing to kill anyone who does not agree with them, whether it is a muggle-born or a neutral pureblood. I, for one, don't want to go so easily into an early grave, not without giving them one hell of a bloody fight."

A Hufflepuff Prefect banged his butterbeer on the table. "Hear, hear!" The others shifted in their seats, fear and uncertainty etched on their faces. "I may not be a Gryffindor but I will learn how to fight!"

"But what makes you qualified in teaching us how to fight?" The blonde Hufflepuff spoke up again.

"Who are you?" Ron butted in, annoyance written all over his face.

"Zacharias Smith." He pointed at Shyamal. "I think we have a right to know more about this boy who will be teaching us. All we know is that he's from a Dark school."

"You've seen him duel Potter." Hermione stated calmly. "All of you were there and can agree that he knows how to fight-"

"Potter was trained by Professor Black." Neville interjected quietly. "And Shyamal was able to easily beat him."

"- as Durmstrang's standards for dueling are more advanced than Hogwarts, who focuses more on academics than practicality." Hermione continued.

"I won't be teaching you Dark Arts." Shyamal stated quietly but firmly. "The only reason why many people consider Durmstrang to be Dark was because Grindalwald came from there even though he never graduated. If you apply the same logic, then you can say Hogwarts is a Dark school as Voldemort did graduate from here." Shyamal leaned back, closing his eyes. "You don't even need to know the Killing curse to kill someone anyway." The other students paled.

"See! Look what he's saying!" Smith pointed at Shyamal, eyes dancing wildly.

"When someone comes calling one night and it down to you or him, what are you going to chose?" That shut Smith up. "All of you have to understand the times have changed in a course of six months. People are going to die. There will be times where you will have to protect the ones you love at any and all costs, even if it means killing another human. That's a fact of war whether you like it or not."

The group was silent.

Hermione turned to the others, hands wringing slightly in front of her. "Moving on . . . are all of you going to join us and learn how to fight from Shyamal?" One by one, the students nodded. "Okay, now we have to agree on how often are we going to meet and so on-?"

"These lessons can't class with our Quidditch matches." Angelina interrupted.

"No, nor with ours." Zacharias added.

The Asian Ravenclaw nodded. "Nor with ours."

"Fine but I think fighting to save our lives and to defend ourselves from Voldemort and his Death Eaters is more important." Hermione murmured.

"I agree!" Macmillan said loudly, causing the Asian girl's friend to jump slightly. "I see no benefit from the Ministry hoisting such an individual as Umbridge on us when we have a perfectly good DADA professor in Mr. Black."

"The reason why the Ministry is keeping an eye on the DADA classes is because they are afraid of Dumbledore creating a private army within Hogwarts." Ginny answered.

"Why would they think that?" Zacharias asked scornfully, shrinking a little at the glares he received from Hermione and Ron.

"Look at how much power Dumbledore had before the Tournament." Damian tapped the table. "Before Dumbledore could have said one word and Fudge's reputation and political power would have collapsed right then and there and he knows it too."

"That and the fact Fudge has a private army of his own." Luna said dreamily.

"What? I didn't hear that." Dean asked, eyebrows scrunching together.

"He's got an army of heliopaths under his command."

"No he hasn't." Hermione argued.

Luna's eyes flicked to her. "Yes he has."

"No, he doesn't."

"What are heliopaths?" Seamus asked.

"Spirits of fire. Heliopaths resemble giant Oryx that are tall creatures who gallop across the battlefields and burn everything within reach. They-"

"Don't exist." Hermione interrupted, looking slightly ruffled.

"Yes they do!"

"There is no proof that heliopaths exists." Hermione shot back."

"Just because it's not listed in a book in the library does not mean it's not real!"

"Hem, hem!" Everyone jumped up, searching for Umbridge. Not seeing her, they glanced at each other as they sat down. Ginny smiled. "Perhaps we should get back to the topic at hand?" Everyone laughed, the tension relaxing.

"Once a week sounds cool." Lee stated, finishing his drink. "We seventh years have important things to do." Hermione gave a noise of assent as everyone nodded in agreement, writing it down.

"Where are we going to meet?" Hala asked, finishing her pint of milk.

"The library?" Katie offered a few seconds later.

Damian shook his head. "Madam Pince will Avada Kedavra us all if we do anything in her precious library. Imagine if we accidentally burned a book or something?"

Dean scratched his head. "What about an unused classroom? McGonagall might let us use hers."

Shyamal shook his head. "Too open. Umbridge would probably be able to find us."

"That and I don't think she would be too chuffed in letting us use hers for rule-breaking." Ron added grimly.

"The Forbidden Forest is too dangerous to do it in there." Cosmas looked up at the ceiling. "And the Towers are too constrictive. If we're caught, there'd be no way of us being able to escape."

"We'll find out a way." Hermione said confidently, writing notes on a spare piece of parchment. Setting it to the side, Hermione pulled out her satchel, rummaging through it as she looked for something. "Before I forget, I think everyone should sign this." She pulled out a long piece of parchment and set it on the table. "So we know who came. Once you sign, however, you are agreeing not to tell Umbridge anything about this from the location to who's in it."

The looks of uncertainty came back.

"Um, I'm sure Ernie will let me know." Shyamal looked at the Hufflepuff prefect who was staring at the parchment warily himself.

"What if this parchment falls into the wrong hands?" Ernie asked Hermione.

"Do you really think I would leave this parchment lying around for Umbridge to find?" The Gryffindor Prefect asked icily.

"No, no, it's just." Ernie took a deep breath, steeling himself. "I'll sign."

The parchment was passed around. Shyamal was the last to sign it. He took out his wand and placed the tip on the surface. The names began to fade until not a single ink mark was left, leaving behind a parchment that looked brand new and unused. "There, now no one but Hermione can read it." Everyone relaxed a bit, Ernie giving Shyamal a small smile of thanks.

Fred whistled before standing up. "Well, time's a burning and we got things to do."

The others quickly bid their goodbyes, leaving in the groups this time.

"Well that went more easily than I thought." Shyamal stated, drinking the last of his butterbeer.

"Where did you learn that trick to wipe the parchment clean?" Hermione took the parchment from Shyamal and looked at it. There was no sign of it having been written on. "I should have thought of that."

"I'll teach you how to make the names appear tonight." Shyamal slid his wand back on to its holster. "So are there any sights worth seeing in Hogsmeade or is the Hog's Head it?"

Hermione and Ron glanced at each other before turning back to the four Suha siblings with grins.

## Chapter Fourteen- Gryffindor vs Slytherin

With the attack on Andiron, the Daily Prophet had kept a constant update on the investigation into Harry Potter and his record. Dozens of wizards and witches kept sending in reports of various sightings which had the Auror Department being hard pressed to cover them all. The public was also keeping a sharp eye on Dumbledore and Potter, looking for any signs of foul play. Sturgis Podmore, one of Dumbledore's supporters had been arrested a week into October for trying to force his way into the Ministry. Shyamal only knew the tide was turning more and more each day against Dumbledore and Edward.

The report that his brother was back, alone, had a dramatic impact on Edward from the first moment.

Before, his temper had always had a leash on it, thanks to the presence of his mom and Professor Black who would talk to him when he needed it. Afterwards, however, was a different story; his temper had suddenly been brought up to the surface, simmering quietly for any little spark to ignite it. Theodore Nott had been the first victim when he had taunted the Boy Who Lived about his Death Eater brother and his dead siblings. Edward had snapped when Nott had switched to his mom. When it was all said and done Umbridge had assigned Edward detention with her while Ms. Davis escorted the dazed and hexed form of Nott to the infirmary for treatment. The one thing that puzzled Shyamal was the fact that the scars that should have been a pearly white on the back of his hand were still only faint markings, like an old scar. It stood to reason that perhaps he went to Mrs. Potter for medical supplies.

The full moon of October a few days later was completely different from the full moon in September. Professor Black seemed to be holding a grudge still against Shyamal and by default, his siblings. Shyamal had been surprised when he had received a note from the DADA professor warning them to stay in the dormitory that night. The next morning, Cosmas and Damian had told him they had been locked in the Shrieking Shack. Shyamal nodded, telling him that he would take it up with Professor Dumbledore later.

During the next couple of weeks, Shyamal's friendship with the Weasleys and Hermione had deepened even further. Cosmas and Damian could be seen hanging around with Fred, George, and Lee,

making the others think they were being trained to become the new pranksters after the Weasley twins at the end of their final year. Hala hung around Dennis Creevey, Demelza Robins, and Jack Sloper who were all on the Reserve team. Shyamal had noticed that Hala had started to spend more time with them than with him, something that slightly saddened him. On the other hand, he was glad that Hala was developing more friendships.

Shyamal himself was hanging out with Ron and Hermione, now. The three of them could be found in the common room studying or out on the grounds talking mindlessly near the Seraphina paddocks. A few times, he found himself talking with Ginny about some mindless topics. With Ron, he was able to catch up on the latest Quidditch rumors and gossips. To him, it seemed the Chudley Cannons were as bad as ever. Hermione was able to teach him some different techniques in charms and transfiguration.

Everything seemed to be calming down except for one little fact.

The first game of the season was approaching swiftly, evident in the increased time on the Quidditch pitch under Angelina's urging. The Weasley twins ensured him it could be worse, relaying stories under Wood's captaincy.

Already, the anticipation for the first game had been building in the week leading up to it.

The Saturday arrived with a slightly overcast day, the clouds gently riding the breeze. The Great Hall was a-buzz with excitement and happiness. Bets were going around on how Shyamal would fare in his first match at Hogwarts and against Slytherin. Last night, Angelina had made the decision for Shyamal to be the only one using a Firebolt in the game as he owned one. Reluctantly, the rest of the team agreed, knowing they would want to be known for their skill.

The news of the decision had swept through the rest of the students like fiendfyre, whispers following the team everywhere. A few Slytherins were even boasting that the Gryffindors would get squashed without the brooms as the entire Slytherin team were using Nimbus 2001. Ron simply replied back that it was to make up for the obvious lack of skills of the entire Slytherin team. For dramatic effect, George and Fred had polished their battered bats at

the Gryffindor table the previous night, looking pointedly at the Slytherin Chasers.

"How bad can it be?" Shyamal asked the morning of the game, placing a spoonful of eggs onto his plate. "I've heard that the Slytherins will play dirty but exactly how dirty?"

"Just barely in the limits of the rules dirty and not even then." A fresh taunt came from a passing Slytherin who just happened to be walking by. "I wonder why they even bother. I've been handling them for three years on my own." Ron added more fried eggs and toast to his plate. If Shyamal hadn't already gotten used to the amount the boy ate, he would have been worrying if he could keep all that food down during the match without vomiting over the posts.

"Oy, is that Luna?" Ginny asked in shock, leaning slightly from her seat to look at the doors. Everyone in the immediate vicinity followed her line of sight. A girl that Shyamal had only seen in during meals and in the halls was striding toward them, her hat in the shape of a large red and gold lion.

"Wicked!" Cosmas breathed, taking in the sight of the life like animal. "When did you think she did that?"

The girl stopped before him. "I did it last night. I had planned to have it battling a snake and winning but there wasn't enough time sadly. But I was able to charm it do this." The girl pulled out her wand and tapped it at the base of her hat. Everyone jumped as it let out a realistic roar.

"Oh, you have to teach me how to do that."

"Guys, this is Luna Lovegood from Ravenclaw. Luna, you know my brothers and my friends. This is Shyamal, Cosmas, Damian, and Hala."

"Pleased to make your acquaintance." Luna said in a dreamy like voice. "I see you're not letting the Slytherins get to you, Ronald."

"After a couple of years, you get used to it." Ron stuffed some sausages into his mouth, chewing quickly. "They've been trying to sing that ridiculous song around me the last few days. The one

about 'Weasley is our King'. Not working much but only to make me more inclined to prove them wrong."

"That's the spirit." Dean yelled, slapping the Gryffindor prefect on the back. "We know you'll do a fine job of protecting the goals.

Hala shook her head. "I can't believe they let the sportsmanship of a sport degrade to that."

"Well, it's relatively harmless." Hermione said slowly. "The worst was when Edward first joined the team. Everyone thought it was going to be a sure win for Gryffindor after the stunt Edward pulled in the first flying class. The Slytherin team was hexing team players left and right before the game. It didn't matter though, we still lost the game."

"If anyone tries to hex Shyamal, they're going to be missing a few parts." Hala said darkly.

"I don't think anyone is going to hex him or even try." Ginny turned to Luna. "I'll see you."

"Bye Ginny." The small girl left, not caring of the hisses aimed her way. She did, however, stop by a haughty female who was whispering to her friends. Luna tapped the base again, causing the girl to spill some jam down the front of her blouse.

"Oh, she's good." Cosmas' eyes were still on Luna. "I have to find a way about that hat. It has some serious possibilities."

"You'd think so?" Cosmas leaned toward his brother and began whispering fervently.

Down the bench, Angelina stood up, her game face on. "Team, to the pitch." The Gryffindors screamed crazily as the seven players made their way past them.

"Is it always this crazy for a game?"

"Shyamal, it's a way of life here." Ron wrapped an arm around Shyamal's shoulders.

Thirty minutes later, the stands were filling up while the Gryffindor team stood just inside the tunnel. Angelina stopped before Shyamal

and Ron. "This is your first game so it's alright to feel nervous. Don't let the Slytherins get to you. You both know how to fly and this is the time to show it into their face. Shyamal the only thing I ask for you to catch the Snitch. I don't plan on losing this Cup." She cracked a smile at them. "Make the Lion House proud."

All of them mounted their brooms, the gate opening. Seven red blurs swept out, quickly falling into a flyby form.

"Welcome to the first game of the season. Today it's the red House of Gryffindor versus the vermin infested House of Slytherin!"

"Mr. Jordan!" McGonagall said sharply, sternly looking at the student seating below her in the teacher's stand.

"Sorry, professor. Today's game is the first for Gryffindor's Shyamal Suha who is their starting Seeker and Ron Weasley, their new Keeper who will have to feel some very big holes left behind by the previous Keeper, Oliver Wood-"

Shyamal blacked out the rest of Jordan's commentary, angling his broom to meet in the center of the field. A second later, Draco dropped into his position, the customary smirk back on his face. "Alright there, kitten?" Draco started. "You might want to watch yourself. You're on my territory now."

"I don't have to watch nothing but the Snitch if you behave the same way like you did at the Dueling Club. But then again, it's kind of hard to slip in the middle of the air with no ground." Shyamal retorted, fixing his gloves so they were perfectly snug on his hands.

Malfoy reddened. "We'll see how you handle yourself, Mr. Suha."

"Take care of yourself, Malfoy. Wouldn't want you to get hurt."

Any further remarks were stopped as Madam Hooch made her way onto the field, carrying the trunk carrying the four balls. She dropped heavily into the white circle. "Now, I want a nice, clean game from all of you." She gazed at all the players, her hawk-like eyes boring into them. With a final nod, she mounted her broom, giving the trunk a swift kick to the side. The lid opened, the Bludgers quickly taking to the air, the Golden Snitch zooming away. She grabbed the Quaffle

and with a flick of her wrist, the red ball was thrown into the middle of the teams and the game began.

Angelina took position of the Quaffle first, flying to the Slytherin goals where Miles Bletchley waited for her. As she neared, she quickly dropped the ball, Alicia and Katie right there to intercept from opposite directions. Slipping behind her friend, Katie caught the Quaffle while Miles took after Alicia, spinning it right into the left goal. A roar sounded from the Ravenclaw stands, no doubt Luna.

"Gryffindor scores! That's 10-0 to the House of Red and Gold! Nice play there by Angelina Johnson- Ouch Bludger sent by Fred Weasley knocks the Quaffle out of the slimy snake's hands-"

"Jordan!"

"Merlin! Look at the display on the Slytherin side!"

Shyamal turned just enough to see a Slytherin stand or what was a Slytherin stand. The green field was still there with its silver snakes with one major difference. A red and gold lion was among them, roaring silently as it twisted around. Then it leapt forward, disappearing from that Slytherin to the next one, the score following close behind.

Someone had charmed the banners.

Smiling, Shyamal flew over the Ravenclaw stands, eyes searching for any sign of the gold fluttering ball. He winced when he saw the large oaf Vincent Crabbe sent a Bludger straight into Alicia's side, sending the girl straight into the wall under a Hufflepuff stand. The crowd gasped and gawked as the Quaffle was taken up again by Slytherin Chaser Graham Montague and taken toward the Gryffindor goals. A crack right behind him kicked him into a dive, the second Bludger following him, passing another Slytherin Chaser, Adrian Pucey who was heading to support Montague. The Slytherin veered away as his mate lost the Quaffle to Katie who deftly swiped it from the back.

"Nice dive, Shyamal!" Fred grunted as he cracked the Bludger back to Warrington who was heading to intercept Katie.

"Another score by Gryffindor! 20-0!"

A dab of gold caught Shyamal's eyes. He sped after it, lying down along his broom, the wind whipping into his hair. It dove, heading straight for the tunnel in the tower stands. The crowd yelled, students diving to get out of the way as he followed the Snitch into it, barely missing a girl who tumbled back. The Snitch zoomed straight up; rounding the tower as Shyamal arced back, clearing the tunnel. But the Snitch had already disappeared.

"Guess it learns." He whispered to himself. Shyamal heard Draco zoom on past.

"40 to zero, Gryffindor in the lead. Quaffle taken by Adrian. Montague takes it, Slytherins score. 40-10, Gryffindor--"

The two teams continued to fight on back and forth, with the Slytherins using every trick in the book to regain control of the Quaffle. It was 70-30 when Shyamal caught sight of the Snitch again, hovering near the Hufflepuff stands. The Firebolt listened to his command, shooting around and gaining speed as he neared the previous ball. He could the Slytherins yelling at Malfoy but the words were lost in the howling of the wind.

The Snitch took off as if knowing it was on his radar, zooming to the ground and shooting to the middle of the field. Shyamal was forty feet away when it shot into a new direction, leaving the ground to the open air. But a second later, it was shooting back down to the ground. Shyamal dived, missing Warrington by scant inches as the boy flew past overhead, legs swinging wildly. Vincent Crabbe appeared right before him, bat swinging forward as the Snitch rocketed into another direction. Shyamal reached out, cold numb fingers closing around the fluttering ball to catch right before the burly Slytherin Beater but his momentum was too much as he tried to lift his handle up. The bat connected with the side of his head, white stars and flashes clouding his vision. The next second, pain exploded in his side, the Bludger sent his way by Goyle smashed into the side of his body. Green and brown came up to meet him as he landed roughly on the ground, rolling to a stop right before the Ravenclaw stands.

Hooch's whistle blew, the stands erupting in cheers as the score was confirmed. But the instructor was having none of it, landing near

Shyamal. "What conduct! Mr. Crabbe, Mr. Goyle, come here this instant!"

Shyamal groaned, rolling onto his stomach, hissing in pain as his side was jarred, trying to get to his feet. He was sure a couple of his ribs were broken by the charmed iron ball. His side was on fire along with his head. He could feel his warm blood seeping down the side of his head.

"Out of my way!" Madam Pomfrey in her white medical robes pushed her way through the blue and bronze students beginning to surround them. She placed a gentle hand on his back, keeping him there from getting on his hands and knees. "Don't move, lad. Let me check you with a diagnostic spell so we can be safe there aren't any lasting effects from those tactics. Episkey." The wound stopped bleeding.

Thumps sounded nearby as the rest of the Gryffindor team landed, Angelina quickly going to her injured Seeker. "Shyamal, are you alright?"

"Yeah, as good as I can be after being slammed twice." Shyamal grabbed her hand, and in front of the Ravenclaws, handed her the Golden Snitch. "As ordered, Captain."

"When I said 'catch the Snitch', I don't mean to kill you're self in the attempt." Angelina said softly, trying to not smile.

Madam Hooch took the small ball from the Gryffindor captain, pocketing it in her white and black robes. "I believe Gryffindor wins. As for you, Mr. Crabbe, Mr. Goyle, your conduct in a game is astonishing. You could have killed Mr. Suha." The flying instructor held out her hands, their brooms zooming straight from theirs to hers. "You're here by banned from the game."

"I believe that is my responsibility." Umbridge waddled up to the instructor, coming up only to her chest. "Detentions can only be assigned by me as I am the High Inquisitor."

Hooch huffed, pulling herself to her full height, her yellow hawk eyes fixed solely the shorter woman. "That may be so, Professor Umbridge but your duties only apply to the students with your jurisdiction. Once the 14 students enter my pitch and enter the game,

they are under MY jurisdiction, powers that you do not have the High Inquisitor. Only the Headmaster can overrule me. As they were still on the field of play and have yet to be dismissed by me, Mr. Goyle and Mr. Crabbe's punishments will be assigned by me."

By now Umbridge was red, her toad face twisted into an ugly expression.

Madam Pomfrey finished her spells, satisfied that Shyamal wasn't in any dire situation. "Mr. Suha will be fully recovered by tonight." She handed him three vials. "One is for the broken ribs, the other is for the severely bruised muscles and bones, and the last is for the slight concussion you have from the bat."

Suddenly a commotion erupted in the crowd, right at the edge between the red and green students. The professors made their way forward, the students parting to let them through. They arrived just in time to see Draco getting blasted off of his feet by an enraged Edward.

"Mr. Potter!" Professor McGonagall whipped out her wand, a shield charm jumping into place as Edward's boil hex flew toward the stunned Slytherin Seeker. Her Disarming Charm caught him before he could cast another, his wand flying to her.

That didn't stop Edward. "Don't you dare belittle me, Malfoy!" Before Edward could take a step forward, Hala's wand was out, a Body Bind curse slamming into its target. Edward's legs and arms, snapped together and he would have fallen hadn't Dean caught him.

Lily Potter rushed through the crowd, followed closely by Sirius Black. "What is the meaning of this?" She thundered, quickly removing the curse on her son.

"Well the students please return to the castle at once. Any students not leaving in the next ten seconds will be losing points for their house." McGonagall barked. Despite the three Hourglasses were empty, the students nonetheless left out of respect for the Head of Gryffindor though some sent curious glances toward Shyamal, Crabbe, Goyle, Malfoy, and Potter.

"Your son has seen himself fit to curse Mr. Malfoy." Umbridge said pompously, recovering herself. "Both him and Ms. Suha will visit me in detention for hexing another student."

Pure anger boiled with Shyamal. Bitch was going after his sister despite him being her spy. Pulling on his teachings, Shyamal carefully molded his mask in place, appearing as if he was disappointed in Hala. Gingerly he got up, walking carefully to Hala's side.

"Malfoy was talking bad about my family."

"I was not." Draco fixed his robes, glaring at Edward.

"Enough!" McGonagall looked at Shyamal and Hala. "You heard Madam Umbridge, Mr. Suha. Your sister will be assigned detention with Madam Umbridge. You will receive the notification by lunch today. You're dismissed."

Shyamal didn't say anything, just nodding. Hala didn't complain or say a word as he led her back to the dressing room. It was already empty, no doubt the Gryffindor team organizing a party for tonight's celebration. As he changed back into the school robes, Hala stood forlornly next to the door, staring at the floor.

"I'm sorry, Shyamal."

"It doesn't matter."

"You're mad at me."

Shyamal gritted his teeth, tugging his shirt over his head and tucking it in. "Everything I've done was to keep you away from that bitch and you go hex Edward. You know how evil she is."

"He was going to attack that boy. I couldn't let him get into more trouble. It was already bad enough that he had already hexed him."

"It was over the moment Edward decided to listen to Malfoy. We can't get too deeply involved in this, Hala. Owain has limited contact with us and Akane is in Romania. Literally, we are on our own. One misstep and we can be thrown into Azkaban without a word and forgotten."

Hala's head snapped to his. "We can't forget that Edward is our brother, Harry." His eyes narrowed at the deliberate use of his lost name. "Even though it's been five years and a long road, underneath it all, he's still our brother. I can't forget and I won't. You may want to but I can't." Fury sparked up in Hala's eyes.

Shyamal sighed, dropping his head as he tugged on his black robes. "It's hard for me, Hala. I kept the worst of it from you but I can't forget what happened." He closed the locker door. "And I don't know if I can forgive." He sat on the bench. Hala moved, sitting next to him.

"So he's an arrogant berk. He doesn't have anyone with him, Shyamal. We all had each other but who did he have to turn to?" Hala laid her head on Shyamal's shoulder. "I would do it again."

"I know you would. You're not that type of person."

"Either are you. It's just hidden under all that ice."

Shyamal snorted. "Come on, I bet Cosmas and Damian are worried sick about you having detention with Umbridge."

That afternoon, Shyamal was standing before Umbridge. "What was the meaning of that, Madam Umbridge." His tone was respectful, knowing any sign of disrespect or contempt would work against him.

"The information you have been providing me is not enough. Something is going on between Dumbledore and Potter. Either you are hiding it or you are not a good enough spy to warrant my attention." Umbridge sipped her tea. "As such, I do not have to protect you. Ms. Suha will serve as a reminder of what happens if you don't follow the rules." A smirk tweaked the edges of her mouth but Shyamal still saw it.

So she thinks that she ate the canary. I wonder what she'll say once that canary starts pecking at her insides and with its talons. Shyamal didn't say anything, knowing it would make Hala look like a Potter sympathizer to Umbridge. "You're services, Mr. Suha are no longer required." Hearing the dismissal, Shyamal turned to the door to leave. "Be warned, I will be watching you." Shyamal cocked his head slightly to acknowledge the fact that he heard before leaving.

As he walked back to the Gryffindor common room, Shyamal tried to reason that this was inevitable. Nothing had happened between Edward and Dumbledore as far as he could see except for the extra lessons he was taking with Professor Black and the new set that were with Professor Snape for some odd reason. Something told him that these could not be disturbed and had to be kept from Umbridge.

What would she do with meaningless tidbits that Edward loved Bertie Bott's Every Flavor Beans and Licorice wands? The Fat Lady looked down at him. "Saber Tooth." The portrait swung open to reveal a very empty room. He knew she was going to use those Blood Quills on his sister. He would soon have to make some Essence of Murtlap to set off the scarring from such a Dark object that she would no doubt be receiving a few hours from now.

Thankfully, Hala's hand had recovered by through the nine hours worth of detention with Umbridge, leaving no remnants of the twelve hours she spent carving words into her skin. It had also caused Cosmas and Damian to turn into vicious avengers.

Somehow, the corridor where the Slytherin dorms were had been charmed with a five hour boil hex and a smelling charm. Each time, the Slytherins walked into or out of the common room, the boils and smell would reappear. Professor Flitwick had been able to remove it that morning to the relief of the entire snake house.

Lunch saw the entire House table stuck to the bench, unable to get to their next class. Shyamal had been leaving when he saw Professor Snape storming down to the nearest student. Maybe that weekend, he would have the twins leave the snakes alone. The Weasley twins were another matter as he saw them planning something earlier.

Tuesday night saw Shyamal sitting upon his bed with silencing spells all around him, reading a large tome on Hogwarts to see any details about a rumor that could help him find a room for the defense group. One chapter was solely on the legend of the Chamber of Secrets, the book being a new edition.

Salazar couldn't have been the only Founder with a room of his own. The minutes ticked on by, pages slowly being turned one by one. Shyamal was on the goblin wars in Hogsmeade when a flash of

bright red fire appeared in the air beneath the canopy, a large red and gold bird dropping onto his bed.

It was Dumbledore's phoenix.

The bird's beady black eyes locked onto his. For a minute they just sat there, staring at each other. Then, the bird turned around, the bright and elegant plumage spreading slightly until one single feather rested on Shyamal's left hand.

"You want me to go with you?" The bird nodded, a small note escaping the bird. Shyamal's anxiety decreased slightly, enough for Shyamal to set the book aside on his pillow. He let his wand fall into the palm of his right hand and with the other, grabbed the tail feather firmly but gently.

With a second flash, they were gone.

They appeared in a burst of flame, the elegant phoenix flying past him, the edges of his feathers brushing against Shyamal's cheek.

The thing that Shyamal immediately noted was the day seemed to be blurred, dull. He looked up into the sky.

The moon was continuously inching closer toward the blazing disk of the Sun, the day darkening as the eclipse approached. The phoenix trilled softly, the bird gliding into the forest away from the white beach. He followed, gathering his cloak around him as they went in deeper. He remembered from Astronomy that today was the total eclipse, where the sun was completely covered by the moon. He hadn't cared much for it as the eclipse would only be seen in Southern Asia. By the time England swung around to see the sun, the eclipse be over.

Shyamal was taken out of his thoughts as the mythical creature rapped his head slightly with a talon, before flying up into the canopy. He stood there, wondering what he should do. The red and gold bird came back down, trilling more firmly, shooting up alongside the trunk. Unsure, Shyamal did a partial transformation, letting the feline claws of his panther form to come out so he could grip the bark more easily. Little by little, he climbed the tree, thanking Master Miroslav for the strength and endurance training he had put Shyamal through. The moon was nearing the Sun when Shyamal saw the large nest,

Dumbledore's phoenix sitting right next to it. As he came even, he was shocked to see the black phoenix that had saved them over five years ago was standing next to the red phoenix.

The black phoenix trilled softly, hopping over to Shyamal as he sat himself on a branch.

"Hello, girl." He fingered the feathers on the side of the black mask, wondering why the phoenixes had brought him here. Shyamal gazed into the phoenix nest, eyes widening in shock at what he saw.

Nestled among the discarded red and black phoenix feathers, gathered moss, and woven tree twigs and grass, lay an exquisite phoenix egg. Copper in the waning light with veins of red and gold, it glowed with an inner fire. It wobbled a bit, chirps and whistles coming from inside.

Shyamal flinched when a single crack appeared just as the Sun was kissed by the moon. A chirp sounded from inside the egg, muffled and soft.

He never noticed the two phoenixes flying off.

More cracks followed, a fleck of the shell chipping off.

He moved onto the tree, careful to move on firm, steady branches. Unaware of what he was doing, he started to croon softly to the hatchling inside, leaning in close toward the nest. More shell flakes broke off, a small delicate talon disappearing back into the confines of the shell.

The moon was halfway across the Sun.

Another talon broke the shell, a large hole opening. He could see the wet black and white downy feathers before the mass disappeared back into the protection of the shell.

He watched in fascination as the phoenix hatchling continued to break the shell until just as the moon fully eclipsed the Sun in totality, the new phoenix tumbled free of its home for the past weeks, its small beady eyes falling on Shyamal for the first time, darkness and light exploding around him, his consciousness fading away. . .

Even as the phoenix's name popped into his head like a soft whisper....

## Chapter Fifteen- Eclipsis

Pain.

Indescribable pain rippled through her, penetrating deep in her stone walls and earthy grounds. Cracks were appearing in the foundations of her physical body, slowly splintering the ancient stone. Her heart, the old and aged school of where so many children learned and grew, was decaying.

Decades of mistrust and hate were slowly unwinding the progress of centuries since her fathers and mothers had built her. One by one, the wards protecting her would fall, leaving her vulnerable to the forces of evil-infested darkness prowling behind her had she thought the four Houses of her parents would divide. The fields around the House of Slytherin had been darkening, warping out of character and causing her undue pain.

She could not believe one her lines had been corrupted. The scion of her second father letting the evil of the human heart consume him utterly. her only hope was the lost line of Slytherin would be found in time to reconnect with the other three who now hid among those who slept in the other dormitories.

She only hoped it would be soon.

The four Chambers of the Founders were giving way, their precious treasures threatened with destruction.

The Chamber of Secrets, the home and resting place of Salazar Slytherin, lay beneath the Black Lake, slowly being invaded by the tons of water above. She felt the great snake that had been left behind by her cunning father was dead, its body slowly decomposing under the elements. Even now, she couldn't repair the damage that had caused its death, the wounds adding to her pain.

Warily, she turned to the other Chambers.

Hidden underneath the roots and soil of the Forbidden Forest lay the Chamber of Passion, some of the inner rooms already have given way to weight of the trees above them. The armor of Godric Gryffindor was still intact as well as the main rooms even though

they were now isolated from the rest of the castle. She knew the Sword of Gryffindor was safe, currently in the care of the current Headmaster. She felt another tunnel was close in proximity to the main tunnel that lead to the Chamber of Secrets, a few feet of harden earth the only thing separating the Chamber from the tunnel that wound its way to the boundary near the village.

The Chamber of Resolution was one of two that was the most preserved of the four Chambers. Even now, a heavy layering of dust and grim covered everything, the furniture inside having rotten away a long time ago along with the few unprotected blankets and pillows. Underneath the school itself, deep in the ground, it lived up to its blazon, the badger, snug and comfortable in the dark silent earth. The armor worn by Helga Hufflepuff and her personal tomes were safe.

Rowena's personal library was safe, protected from the elements by heavy layering of spells and charms to keep the books, tomes, and scrolls safe. The Chamber of Acumen was the only other Chamber to be almost perfectly preserved, hidden up higher on the mountain towering over the Hogwarts on its northern side. She thought it was appropriate as the mind of her was located in that mountain which was in fact a fortress.

A fortress that had slumbered for over a thousand years and was now beginning to awaken.

A part of his neck was soothingly warm, a small weight tucked in under his jaw. Shyamal slowly roused himself from the arms of Morpheus, blinking at the red curtains around his bed. The bed covers had been pulled up to his chin, folded back neatly. The last thing he remembered was reading a book on Hogwarts. He let his eyes closed, trying to remember how he got here. Blurry images of the phoenixes flickered through his mind.

Red and black feathers; the moon sliding across the face of the sun, devouring the light; the white and black newborn tumbling free; his mind flowing freer than it had ever been. . .

He shot up in bed, the small weight that had been on his collarbone, tumbling down his chest to land in his lap. Shyamal stared in shock at the white and black fluff ball moving, the newborn phoenix

struggling to upright itself after being rudely dislodged from its sleeping place.

Short underdeveloped wings fluttered clumsily as it regained its balance on the soft mattress. The light metallic grey legs moved, trying to free the small black talons from the weave of the white bed sheets.

Shyamal sat there in shock.

It chirped, the small head tilting to look up at him.

Waves of emotion rippled through his mind, of security and trust. He reached out, letting the phoenix climb into the palm of his hand. "Eclipsis." Shyamal whispered, knowing that was the phoenix's name. The baby chirped, fluffing up its down feathers.

Hungry.

Shyamal smiled.

"Where did you get him?" Damian breathed, the four siblings huddled inside Shyamal's bed. Silencing charms kept their talk prying ears, the curtains pulled around them as Eclipsis was sitting in the middle of the four of them, nibbling on some mashed walnuts and almonds.

"I can't really say, Damian. I was reading a book on trying to find a way to allow the student group to meet when Dumbledore's phoenix-"

"Fawkes." Cosmas stated.

"When Fawkes came and took me to an island. He led me to this tree and at the top was a nest. I was there when Eclipsis came out just as the eclipse came into alignment." Shyamal simply said.

"So you think this phoenix is special?" Hala breathed.

"I don't know. I've only seen two phoenixes in my life." Shyamal looked at all of them sternly. "You can't tell this to anyone. If someone finds out that I have an unbonded and vulnerable baby phoenix, someone will no doubt try to still him."

"You should go to Dumbledore." Damian stated, leaning against one of the posts. "I mean, he probably knows how to take care of one."

Shyamal shook his head. "I have a feeling he would take a great interest in the four of us if I did. The chance of him discovering us would greatly increase. Umbridge is already looking at us to throw us into Azkaban."

"When will he get big enough to fly?"

"Around three weeks, Hala. I checked out a book today that gave some basics on the growth of a phoenix. He won't be able to flash until later on. His first burning will be about in a year, during his first molting."

"This is going to complicate things." Damian locked eyes with Shyamal. "How are you going to exactly hide a magical creature that's going to be as big as a turkey in eight months?"

"I'll find a way." Shyamal gathered Eclipsis into his arms. "I think the best bet would be the owlery under a Glamour charm."

Cosmas laughed. "That seems to be our answer to everything. If you want to hide it, use a Glamour charm!"

Shyamal grinned. "They do work, don't they?" He fingered the necklace under his shirt. "Having Akane and Owain weave the charms into the necklaces was a brilliant move. At least we don't have to keep applying them every few hours."

"I still don't get why I had to get a pink diamond. You should have given that to Hala."

Cosmas tumbled to the floor as the smaller sibling tackled him.

Snape sneered as the Boy Who Lived collapsed, panting from trying to throw the Potions Master out of his mind.

"You're pathetic, Potter. Do you really think that weak will of yours will overcome the will of the Dark Lord? He will easily be able to read your mind just like the one will read a simple children's book. Get up! I will not waste my time with you on the floor."

Edward dragged himself back to his feet, trying to calm his breathing. He raised his wand as Snape shouted "Legilimens!"

Memories started flickering through his mind. . .

A younger Edward running through Godric's Manor, chasing a big black dog that turned into Sirius Black. . . A two year old zooming around on a toy broom, laughing gleefully. . . The white face of the moon as he saw the werewolves charging toward his younger siblings. . . Harry screaming at him to come back. . .

A bang sounded, Snape flying back to crash into the rack behind him. Edward collapsed to the ground, head falling against the stone. He heard Snape regain his feet.

"I don't think I said you could use your wand, Potter." He didn't answer. He just tried to bury those memories again; Edward couldn't let Snape see the whole memory. "I believe we are done for tonight. Get out of my sight."

Without a single word, Edward got up and shakily walked out of the dungeon, heading back to Gryffindor Tower. The same memory kept popping up in his sessions with Snape. Harry screaming at him to come back even as his twin held the bloodied body of Jonathon in his hands, a whimpering seven year old Evie gripping his arm.

The Occlumency lessons with Snape weren't going so well. Even now, the scar that adorned his chest was throbbing in sync with the one on his arm from his 'invitation' to Voldemort's rebirth. To him, it seemed like Snape was helping Voldemort to enter his mind. No matter how hard he tried, Voldemort was able to gain entry in his dreams.

"Fizzing Whizbees." Edward muttered climbing in the moment the Fat Lady had opened enough for him to get through. Tired and exhausted, he climbed up the fifth year dorms, slipping into his bed without saying a word to Neville or Ron who were still awake.

For the past few nights, he kept dreaming of the gloomily light passage, the dream stopping the moment, he came to the closed door. He knew it couldn't be any door in Hogwarts as he knew the

place like the back of his hands, thanks to the Map his father had given him.

His mum was adamant that Snape was on their side but he wasn't so sure. The man hated him, glaring at him so often even though his insults and comments were rare. That was his mum's doing when he had complained to her the first week of school in his first year. She had come to talk to Snape and ever since then, the comments only popped up every few days or even weeks. When he had asked Lily why Snape hated him, she had just winced, saying that the relation between his Potions professor and his father was 'complicated'.

Edward punched his pillow.

Like his life didn't have enough complications and problems already.

Why did he have to be the Boy Who Lived?

## Chapter Sixteen- Detours

The kingdom of the Blood Elves was ancient, having been forged when the Great Pyramid of Giza, Egypt had been built by the Pharaoh's magicians around 2,551 BC. In what would become Europe in the modern age, seven great clans lived across the land but as the years passed, three of the seven fell to disease and war. After years of strife and inner war, the remaining four clans came together and given authority to a single, most trusted family to become the first High King and Queen. During this time, the first order was the design and construction of a series of fortresses and outposts that would mark the boundary of the new kingdom. Once the final stone had been put into place, the four clans moved into the land, one moving from England and the other three from Germany, Netherland, and Spain. With the strengthened army and fortified walls, the Kingdom of the Blood Elves as they were now called manned a continued observation of the borders.

Commander Serkin walked the rampart, eyeing the warriors on the current shift. Quite a few of them were young ones barely a year out of Miroslav's training. Only one was actually keeping a steady eye on the tree line that ran a mere five hundred feet in front of Fortress Uaithne. He started down the stone stairs, reminding himself to ask Captain Markus to send the elf to him, knowing the young elf would be a great captain someday if properly trained and given a chance to prove himself.

The fact was he, himself, was getting old for this.

Already the coldness was beginning to seep into his bones and his mind slowing down. An Elven warrior needed to be quick on his feet and nimble in mind lest he would cause his own death and perhaps another. If you could not trust yourself to be wary of the battlefield, how could your companions trust you in the field of war?

Serkin stopped; head angling toward the paddock were the Seraphinas were enjoying a day out of their stalls. Usually, they were calm, munching on their oats and barley or frolicking around with each other. Today, they weren't. Restless, the steeds were nervously prancing around, heads tossing every which way. Every now and then, one would whinny, ears back along its skull, eyes wild.

"Markus!" The captain up on the rampart leaned over.

"Yes, sir?"

"Is there any disturbance on the front?" The Elven warrior that had caught his eye started, hand drifting to his bow where it leaned ready against the battlements.

"No, sir! All's quiet. We caught sight of a few animals that had crossed the fields in front but other than that, nothing."

"How many animals crossed it?"

The captain took a moment to answer. "Quite a few actually. More than usual as we only see an animal a day at the most-

"How many!" Serkin wanted an answer, not an evasion. "How many animals did you see?"

"About 30 in the last few hours."

Serkin's head whipped around. "Thirty animals in the last few hours where you would only see one a day? How come you didn't notify me of this earlier?" The captain didn't meet his eyes. The hairs on the back of the Elven commander's neck rose, a warning sign. He started back up again, gazing out between the embrasures out toward the tree line, catching another stag running to the south. Lining up with the captain, he gave the order for the Seraphina Guard to prepare.

"Don't you think you're overreacting, sir?" The captain cringed at the look Serkin gave him.

"Something is approaching this way if the animals are running from it." Serkin's sharp eyes began flicking from tree to tree. "I would rather have the Guard mounted up and sweating for an entire week before I get caught with my trousers around my ankles and bow lax, captain. Perhaps that's a lesson you should learn well."

The captain gave a brief nod, hearing the insult insinuated underneath the comment. He started down the stairs. He wasn't even half way down when the first boulder came hurling out of the forest, cracking against the wall.

Yells sounded along the rampart, the guards moving to conceal themselves from their attackers. More boulders came hurtling out of the tree line, striking against the fortress, others gouging into the field before the fortress. Serkin knew immediately what those boulders were for; to provide cover for an invading force.

"Archers!" Serkin commanded, motioning them to line up along the ramparts in ranks. "600 meters in front! Notch!" The archers pulled an arrow from their quivers, setting them into their Elven long bows. "FIRE!" Dozens of the deadly missiles launched into the air, zipping past Serkin's head and angling toward where the boulders were coming from. Just as they were about to enter the canopy, they suddenly lit up, turning to ash.

Serkin's eyes widened then narrowed in realization. "There are wizards there. Hold your fire."

"Wizards?" His captain shifted. "Why would they want to attack us?"

"They wanted us to join forces with them against the British Ministry. One of the Clans has ancient roots in the Isles and they were trying to goad us into helping them. However, I have received word that King Shahriar denied their request for allegiance." The rampart shook as a large boulder struck right under them. "However, wizards are not powerful enough to send such large boulders at us."

The Blood Elf who Serkin had his eyes on came up to them. "Giants. I have been hearing rumors that they have also been visited the Death Eaters."

"The Giants would not join them." The Captain scoffed. His face reddened as Serkin raised a hand to his face, halting any further comments.

"What is your name?"

"Arkimidis, sir." The Elven warrior replied.

Serkin looked at the tree line, knowing the constant barrage would bring the wall down. "Captain, you stay here and make sure the wall isn't breached. Arkimidis, come with me." He headed down the stairs. "Mount up!"

The paddocks began bustling into activity, the waiting warriors quickly preparing their steeds. Word spread through them, large pikes rising with sharpened blades. Light glinted off mithril armor and black dragon leather. An Elf came, holding the reins to his white Seraphina, blue flames flowing in the breeze.

"Commander, cavalry ready!" Captain Bayard rode up next to him, his scarred face set in a grim expression.

"Prepare for wizard attacks. They must be with a squad of Giants. Capture as many as possible. Kill the Giants. Arkimidis, stick with Captain Bayard." Serkin waved his hand and the side gate opened. He gave his Seraphina a nudge, leading the cavalry forward.

Silent and swift, the cavalry moved just as they had been trained. Even then, as the cavalry swung around behind the attacking force to strike them from the back, spells and curses came at them. Serkin flicked out his hand, a shield surrounding his steed even as a curse struck a young warrior's steed from the side, the Seraphina shrieking as it went down in flames and light.

A few cavalry warriors continued thundering on, searching for the Giants.

Serkin pulled his sword from its scabbard, seeing a robed figure sending green, red, and purple curses at the young ones. Without warning he charged. But the wizard caught sight of him and sent a curse at his steed's legs. The next thing Serkin knew, he was tumbling through the grass, rolling to his feet. A flash of purple light, his sword absorbing it, the blade instantly rusting to a dark red color.

Moving across the ground, Serkin dodged another spell, and with a quick thrust, sent his sword across the man's neck, severing his head from his body.

A second Death Eater screamed at him, the voice feminine. The wizard's body hit the floor as a spell landed right in front of him, the ground exploding outward. He landed hard but he was up on his feet.

"DIE, YOU FILTHY CREATURE!"

Serkin flicked his hand out, a green shield surrounding him just in time to reflect a spell back. His sword swung around, aiming for the arm holding the wand but the Death Eater Disapparated to another place, sending a new barrage of spells. They moved together in a deadly dance, light and metal slashing through the air.

Across the battlefield, a giant roared as a number of Elven warriors surrounded it, pikes held at ready. One warrior pulled his arm back and aiming quickly jabbed his arm forward. The pike entered under the giant's arm, slicing right between his ribs. The Giant roared in pain, arm catching the pike, breaking the shaft into pieces. During the distraction, another warrior jabbed into its back.

Serkin jumped high, a Dark spell landing where his feet had been before. Dark purple flames rose up, the tree next to it, igniting quickly. The bark curled and blackened. Using his sword, he deflected another spell.

"Avada Kedavra!" The female Death Eater yelled, her wand emitting a green light but not at the Elven commander. Serkin watched in horror as a new warrior caught it in the arm, his sword immediately dropping from his lax hand. He drew a blade from his belt and flicked it at the Death Eater who screamed as it slid into her spine in her lower back.

Another roar of a dying Giant ripped the air. The one Death Eater assumed was the leader stood up straight. "Retreat back to the Manor!" Pops around the forest echoed, the robed figures disappearing, leaving a few behind. The Giants gave a final look before they took disappeared into the forest.

"Cover the battlefield and check the wounded." Serkin commanded. An Elven warrior nodded, motioning for the remaining warriors to break up. As a squad set up a line where the Death Eaters had left and another began checking the dead bodies, Serkin walked over to where the warrior had been caught by the green spell. Turning him over, Serkin could see the face was frozen in realization, eyes wide and unstaring. A shadow fell over him.

"Do you know who he is?" Serkin asked, closing the eyes.

"H-he's my younger brother." Arkimidis replied, his voice trying to keep steady but failing.

Serkin's head snapped up. "My condolences." He said softly.

"We knew what we were signing up for." Arkimidis swallowed.

The Elf Serkin had commanded just moments earlier came up to them. "We have thirteen dead warriors and four dead Death Eaters with two injured but stable and one critically injured. The one you took down, Commander. Also among the dead is Captain Bayard."

Serkin sighed. "Where is she?"

"Over there, being tended to. They are stabilizing her for transport back to the city." The Elf led them to where Elf healers were surrounding a lone figure laying face down. "She took the knife to her spine, severing it. Blood loss is minimal."

"She won't be able to walk." The chief healer said. "The most we can do is get some feeling into her legs but that's it. "She should be ready to go in a few minutes."

"Filthy creatures!" The woman hissed, her eyes rolling crazily. Serkin picked up the silver mask where it had been discarded. "You will all die by my master's hand."

"Your master has been defeated once before. This attack has not ruled him into our favor and may in fact force the kingdom to join against him." Serkin watched as the dead were being collected. "What's your name?" The woman managed to spit in his face. Wiping it off, he looked at her. "Unlike the Ministry, you will not be tried as easily, for when it comes to war criminals, which you are, the maximum penalties are given. Everything you know will be found. Tell Markus that he is in command while I'm gone. Keep the shifts active and rotating throughout the night. Be alert for anything out of the ordinary. I will report to Shahriar. Arkimidis, you're coming with me."

"Commander, will they attack again?" The Elf asked hesitantly.

"No. Voldemort has learned that he has underestimated us and we are now aware of his treachery as well as having lost his Giants. It would not be wise for him to launch an assault now without his new

allies. Prepare the cavalry for another Giant attack in case however. You know what to do."

Akane ran through the halls, her boots thudding against the marble floor, her long hair flowing out behind her. She ran up the steps to her father's study, bursting through the door. Shahriar looked up at her, Lords Fannar, Merari, Moriarty, Shantus, and Zethrys turning around as well.

"Akane, what is the cause of your abrupt visit?"

"Uaithne, the outpost near the outskirts of Bistrita, has been attacked by a small group of Giants and wizards. They were able to repel the attack but we lost a number of warriors. Commander Serkin are heading here to personally deliver the details to you, Father."

"Have they identified who the wizards are?"

"Yes. Commander Serkin has informed us they were Death Eaters."

"Hermione what are you doing?" Ron peeked over her shoulder, taking a look at what she was doing. "Werewolves? 'Mione, we did that back in third year when Professor Lupin was teaching."

"I know but I've noticed odd about our new friends." Hermione flipped a page, reading a new passage. "Haven't you noticed anything about them?"

"Other than the fact that George and Fred have taken them under their wing or the fact that Hala is acting like Ginny did back in her second year? No, not really. Why?"

Pulling out her calendar she presented it to Ron. "I've noticed that Cosmas and Damian both have disappeared during the full moon during the last two times. The next full moon is happening on Tuesday but the only thing that is puzzling me is the fact that they haven't disappeared the day before or after like Professor Lupin did."

"Maybe because they're not werewolves? I mean, they sometimes disappear with Hala and Shyamal for night time flights."

"I didn't notice that."

"That's the point, Hermione. Hala is in the Second Year dorms while you're in Fifth Year dorms." Ron placed a finger on the edge of the calendar. "And what if they are werewolves?"

"Would it matter? Professor Lupin is a better man than most of the wizards I've seen. He is more compassionate, understanding, and smart." Hermione tapped a chin. "The only way we can know for sure is if we wait until after. If they do disappear on Tuesday during classes, then we'll confront Shyamal on Wednesday."

"Is that wise? You know how protective Shyamal is of his siblings." Ron shifted under the look Hermione gave him. "I'm just saying. I don't want to duel him after seeing him against Potter and Malfoy. He might get- you know- angry that we found out."

Hermione fiddled with that calendar. "I know. It's just that they have this sense of mystery around them. I've noticed they don't speak Romanian or Bulgarian where Durmstrang is located. And their English is slightly accented but they speak it rather well. I've also noticed that the twins speak in another language I can't quite identify."

"We don't know their history. I mean, why should they?"

His bushy friend was quite for a moment. "I have this need to find out about them." She sighed. "We'll have to wait and see."

"If you're sure, Hermione." Ron handed her calendar back. "Do you want to go down to Hagrid's? Colin just told me that he saw smoke coming from Hagrid's hut."

"Sure, why not? Hermione gathered her text books, shoving them into her school bag. As they were leaving, Ron caught sight of something. His face started turning red but Hermione quickly grabbed his hand and pulled him through the portrait into the hall. "Don't even think about it Ron."

"B-b-but he was leaning toward Ginny! She's fourteen! She's too young to have a boyfriend!"

"That's her decision. Honestly, Ron. Ginny can defend herself. I think you saw what happens when you piss her off." Hermione huffed, steering her friend down to the grounds. "Come on, Hagrid will be happy to see us."

Shyamal had known Eclipsis would grow fast. He didn't realize just how fast.

By the first week, he could no longer keep him in his pocket as it was getting obvious he was keeping something from his fellow students and the professors. He had quickly fashioned a small ankle chain from one of the necklaces Akane had given him when he was smaller. Using the techniques he had cast on himself to hide his true features, had induced a glamour charm into the necklace.

Eclipsis, hidden as a baby owl, was carried up to the Owlery where Shyamal talked to his Snowy owl, Hedwig. Thanks to his care and nurturing, she had slowly come out of her shell with the help of the other three owls. The past weeks, the four owls had taken to flying around the castle in loose maneuvers, much to the enjoyment of the students and staff. Hedwig had taken him under wing, making sure Eclipsis ate enough to keep up with his growth spurts. It was under her watchful eye, that Eclipsis began hopping from one perch to another, despite protests from the other owls. Two weeks old, Eclipsis was about as big as large teddy bear.

Shyamal hated being away from Eclipsis but he had no other plan at the moment. He sighed, knowing the glamour charm would only hide so much. By the third week, he had a feeling Eclipsis would be as huge as an extra large teddy. He heard his name being called, looking at Ron and Hermione walking up the steps from the outside.

"Hey, guys."

"Shyamal."

"Where are you walking from?"

"Hagrid's. He just came back from a journey so we decided to visit him today before we head back to class on Monday." Hermione told Shyamal as they started climbing the stairs back to Gryffindor Tower.

"Oh, he's back? I've been hearing that Umbridge is looking for a reason to get him removed as the professor for Care of Magical Creatures."

Ron snorted. "Hagrid's a good professor. He knows his stuff and teaches it well but it's the bloody Slytherins that disrupt his classes." The Prefect went on and told Shyamal what happened between Malfoy and a hippogriff named Buckbeak in Third year. "Slashed him up good but Buckbeak was sentenced to death. Luckily, he escaped right before the executioner was sentenced to kill him."

"I've only meet Hagrid when we first arrived. He seems an okay bloke." Shyamal stated.

"Yeah but sometimes he forgets that the rest of us aren't half-giants with a fondness for dangerous creatures. I remember the la- hold on, the stairs changing." Ron said hanging onto the banister as the marble staircase swung around.

"That's odd. This staircase doesn't move that way." Hermione looked around. "It's supposed to swing the other way to the East side of the fourth floor." The staircase came to a stop at a blank wall, right between two portraits of wizards dueling witches. "That's extr-" Her words were cut off as the stoned began to fold backwards on itself, revealing a new passage.

"Is it safe, do you think?" Ron asked, glancing backward. The opened hall they had just came through suddenly closed, leaving the hallway ahead the only option. "Bloody bugger, I say we get off this staircase and into a hall before the staircase decides to disappear as well." Before Shyamal or Hermione could say anything, Ron started down, cautiously entering the passage. "It looks alright."

Shyamal followed, hand drifting to his side, ready to un-holster his wand. "Looks like the other halls, just empty." It was true. Grey stone lined the walls, ceiling, and floor, stretching out to another opening. At the opening on either side, stood two suits of armor, pikes held ceremoniously in front of them at parade rest.

The three walked forward, looking around. They walked past the suits and into a large circular room. Four tapestries lined the walls, one of each carrying the shields for the four Houses of Hogwarts. On the floor in the exact center was a thick circular line made of

entwined threads of red, green, blue, and yellow, an 'H' carved deep into the center stone.

"Have you ever seen this before?" Shyamal asked the other two. They shook their heads.

"Hogwarts: A History never mentioned a room like this." Hermione moved to the line, crouching right next to it. She pulled out her wand, tapping the edge of one of the threads. It glowed a bright purple before fading. "I've never seen something like this before. It's been infused with magic so it must have a purpose. But what, I can't exactly say."

"But why would that staircase bring us here?" Ron asked, uneasily looking around. "Do you think Dumbledore knows about this place?"

"He didn't know where the Chamber of Secrets was." Hermione stood up, walking around. "There could be more secrets about Hogwarts than what even he knows about, probably even what he believes about. Hogwarts was built over a thousand years ago. Who's to say that every single little tidbit of information was passed down about what's in these walls?"

"You should have definitely been in Ravenclaw." Ron muttered. "Well I'm getting hungry so I think I'm going to head back-" They jumped around as a clash reverberated throughout the room. Ron looked at the suits of armor whose pikes were now crossed, blocking the way back. "I guess I'm not hungry anymore."

Shyamal crouched down near the line as well. "This place is a dead end so there has to be a way out of here and I bet it's this circle." He moved to the 'H', looking over every detail. Warily, he stood up and with a deep breath stepped into the circle. A flash lit up the space and when the two remaining Gryffindors looked again, he was gone.

As the light faded away, Shyamal flicked his wrist, his wand settling into his palm.

He was in an altogether different part of the castle, white gleaming marble adorning the room now. Looking down, he saw the same etching of the 'H' and lines were on the floor. He stepped off then stepped back in.

Nothing.

"Bloody hell." He was stuck here in an unknown place. Deciding to see where he was, Shyamal headed for the opening that resembled the one in the previous room he had been in. This time, they were carrying large broadswords and white flowing capes. Glancing at them as he passed, he saw no movement.

The passage way was short with heavy oak doors at the end. He was about to push open one of the two when he heard his name being called. "I'm down here!" A second later, both Hermione and Ron were swiftly heading to him, the red-haired boy looking slightly tousled. "What happened to you?"

"When you disappeared, Ron started to panic slightly and tried to go back the way we came. Needless to say, the suits were having none of it." Hermione summarized.

"You'd think a suit of armor would be slow." Ron shrugged. "Now I definitely know the only way backward is forward."

"Where do you think we are?"

Shyamal glanced back at the door. "At this moment, I'm thinking we're in another part of the castle that no one knows about. The walls and everything, however, seem to have marble facing at the very least." He motioned toward the door. "I was about to open it and see what is on the other side."

"Might as well, eh?" Together the three of them pushed the door, stumbling slightly as it eased swiftly around.

"Oh my." Hermione breathed, taking in the sight.

It was another circular room but this one was grander than the last one.

It looked like they were in a courtyard surrounded by high walls of white stone that stretched out to a large castle that looked even grander than Hogwarts. Shyamal could see the castle was built right into the face of a large mountain, the steep cliffs on either side continuing to rise to the mountaintop that was hidden in the white clouds above. Before them, a large courtyard filled the area, grass

waist high and golden yellow, gently waving in the breeze. The fountain before them bubbled gently, clear sparkling water cascading down from the mermaid's vase into the pond at its base.

"If I didn't know better, this looks like something out from the Lord of the Rings." Hermione said, tilting her head every which way.

"The Lord of the what?" Shyamal asked.

"It's a fictional Muggle book, quite popular."

"It looks like a haven or a fortress." Shyamal motioned to the entrance on the other side of the courtyard. "Maybe the way to go back is in there?" They moved forward.

"If we're lucky, there can be brooms to ride back." Hermione shivered. "I hate riding brooms."

"For all we know, Hogwarts can be far, far, away."

"Honestly, Ron. Don't you remember the mountain that's to the North of the castle, the one that is part of the range of mountains that surround this valley?" At his blank look, she sighed. "We're on the mountain next to Hogwarts that sits right on the boundary lines of the grounds? It's about a mile from the school."

"It's still Hogwarts then. Perhaps the Founders built this one too." Shyamal didn't remember anything like this from the books in the Blood Elf's library. "What exactly should we find?"

"A way out that's for sure." They passed a gated arch, entering another passage. Another pair of oak doors stood, this time, great lengths of iron running across it.

They pushed a door open and entered what resembled the Great Hall. Opposite them sat five marble statues, three men and two women right where the Staff table would have been.

"It's the Founders and Merlin." Hermione was literally bouncing on her feet. "That's Salazar, Helga, Merlin, Rowena, and Godric!" She named off the statues from left to right.

"Indeed you are correct, Ms. Granger." The three teens spun around to see a woman in black robes standing right behind them.

## Chapter Seventeen- Espiritus Castellum

Her features were plain but elegant, her slim face sweeping gently into a smile. Her black hair with silvering streaks swept up into an elegant bun just like Professor McGonagall's. Her black robes were trimmed in red, yellow, green, and blue. Her slim fingers were held lightly in front of her, no wand in sight. Power and wisdom seemed to roll off her in gentle waves, soothing but alerting you that this was no ordinary woman. In fact, a woman you should not be messing with if you valued your life.

"Who are you?" Ron blurted out, unable to keep the question in. He inched closer to Shyamal, his fingers twitching just a bit.

"You're Hogwarts, aren't you?" Shyamal softly answered Ron's question, his mind putting the pieces together. Though he could see her, she did seem to have an ethereal quality to herself, like one would see in a dream. There but not there.

"Indeed, I am. Mr. Suha." Shyamal tensed under her stare, seeing her eyes bore into him. I know who you are, Mr. Potter and though I may not agree with your decision to keep your existence from your parents, I will abide by it.

He blinked.

"That's impossible." Hermione started, snapping out of her state. "I mean, Hogwarts can't be alive. Magic cannot create life; it's against one of the Laws of Magic."

The woman lifted a hand, tapping the side of her chin with a finger. "You know magic is in all living things, correct?" Hermione nodded. "Even rocks and metals have slight affinity for magic, especially if they are treated with special means. It helped that my mothers and fathers imbued a piece of their own soul into me, knowing they would not last forever, with help from the Sorcerer Merlin. In essence, I am their child of their souls."

"You actually carry their souls." Ron blanched.

Hogwarts, as Shyamal now started identifying her, chuckled lightly. "I do have their memories and experiences, if that is what you mean.

However, I am not truly them or even a reincarnation of them. I do have certain aspects, like Salazar's cunning, Rowena's intelligence, Helga's love, and Godric's nobleness."

"Why haven't you revealed yourself to the student or even the Headmaster?" Hermione asked.

"Ah, I believe that comes a bit from both Salazar and Rowena. I may be a school but I do have some sense of self preservation and I do understand the fact that a number of people would come to me to ask the 'Founders' for advice on certain issues. I could not have that risking the education of the students nor the safety of the school itself." She paced a bit. "Then there's the fact I need to hide my very existence from those who would do irreparable harm to the school."

"Voldemort."

"Precisely." She stopped. "But now, I fear the dissent within the school is worsening with every year and as Hogwarts is the sum of all four Houses, the division is causing great amounts of harm within the hall and in the school itself."

"What do you mean? Are you falling apart?"

"Ron!"

"He is right, Ms. Granger. I am literally falling apart inside of myself. I can feel the cracks that are beginning to form in the foundations of both castles and the walls hidden in the earth around the boundaries have begun to decay. The wards that have protected the school for so long are failing despite attempts from the current Headmaster to keep them up. I do not know how long I will last under these circumstances."

"Both castles? We're not in Hogwarts?" Shyamal asked.

"Ms. Granger was right when she stated that we are in the mountain near the school itself. What is not readily known to the wizards outside is that the Founders did indeed build a second castle." Her arms rose, motioning toward the room. "This, this is the safe haven of those who are not afraid of change, of who are willing to carry on their ideals of humanity, respect, and tolerance against a tide of true Evil. This is the *Espiritus Castellum*, the Refuge of the Spirit."

"True Evil?"

"I have heard of the wizard's so called definition of true Evil. Just because one is Dark does not mean they are Evil. They only become Evil when they do so to harm others merely for the sport of it. Voldemort or the boy who once passed these halls as Tom Marvolo Riddle became Evil when he lost the ability to see humanity for what it was and started harvested delusions of grandeur."

"Oh."

"Why did you show us this?" Hermione asked, her fingers itching to grab a piece of parchment.

"As I awoke from my slumber, I sensed your intentions, especially as you are the ones to fight against the evil one who calls herself a teacher and who walks my halls. In doing so, I have also sensed your need." Hogwarts stared that them. "You are the only four who are willing to take the steps necessary to protect themselves. And in your passion, you have sent the few pebbles that have now caused similar passions to fall into the other two Houses."

The three students glanced at each other. Shyamal met Hogwarts' eyes. "Do you know where we could hold a meeting enough for the entire study group then?"

A smile curved over her features. "Indeed, I do, Mr. Suha. One that would more than adequate for your needs."

"I still don't understand why Snape is the one teaching my son Occlumency." James set his glass down on the table, staring at his old professor. "Why can't we get another Occlumens to teach Edward?" James was in Hogwarts, visiting his wife as she stayed in her quarters because it was easier for her than traveling to Potter Manor than back every day. For James, Fudge was keeping a close eye on him so James only came on the weekends, knowing even that was pushing the boundaries of suspicions.

It only made James hate Fudge even more, forcing him to look over his shoulder when he should be focusing on his wife and remaining child than dealing the fucking bloody political machine.

"I have already told you, James, that there is hardly anyone beside me and Severus who can withstand a Legilimens attack from Voldemort." Dumbledore held up his hand, preventing James from speaking. "And I cannot teach Edward myself because of the risk of Voldemort finding anything of great importance or Merlin forbid, using Edward against me."

"It's just that Edward has complained that the lessons aren't helping like you said." Lily said softly. "He states that after the lessons, he can see the vision more clearly which means his connection with Voldemort is stronger. I see Edward suffering from headaches the day after on."

"Can't you at least talk to him, Albus?" James pleaded.

"I'll do what I can, James." The old headmaster took a sip of his tea. "Have there been any word on the attacks by the Dark Heir?"

James growled darkly as Lily blinked back tears. "No, some Aurors have taken up the term as well speaking about him. All of the evidence if you can call it that points to him being the one who is now the leader of the Death Eaters who escaped persecution fourteen years ago."

"I don't believe Fudge will let this go. He'll try to use Harry as the one to blame for all of the attacks. He won't care that Bellatrix can be the one masterminding the plans or even Lucius." Lily said, pouring some more tea into her cup and adding sugar. "There are so many possibilities of who can actually be leading them. Harry could just be a figure head."

"That's because Lucius Malfoy is bloody greasing Fudge's pockets for the upcoming elections in a year." James huffed.

Albus rested his head on his hands. "Is there anything particularly definitive that proves Harry is the Dark Heir beyond a doubt?"

"Not really. The surviving eyewitness accounts say that his eyes were a bright green and his hair as black as the night. The rest of his features were hidden by that mask." James paused. "The only other proof is what he says when we check through the memories."

"Then, there is a chance that it isn't Harry." Dumbledore stated simply, face solemn, eyes unfocused slightly.

"Dumbledore you know that Harry fled with a group of Death Eaters five years ago when we lost Danny, Jon, and Evie." James hissed.

"He could be dead, James, for all we know. With magic, the boundaries between certainty and uncertainty are blurred beyond what we can see immediately. Illusions can be made so easily." Dumbledore snagged a biscuit off the plate. "Either way, this Dark Heir will prove to be a formidable opponent on the battlefield. From the reports you have given me, James, he seems to be at Bellatrix's level in dueling if not her superior."

"What else get worse?" James banged his fist onto the table, knowing Bellatrix could easily take on a most if not all of the Auror force on a one to one duel and win.

"I do have a bit of news." Dumbledore said slowly. "It seems the Blood Elves have declared war on the Giants after being attacked."

"Blood Elves, the Kingdom on the Continent?" James asked, brows furrowing deeply.

"Romania to be exact." Lily leaned forward. "Why did they get attacked?"

"It seems to me that the Death Eaters tried to recruit them on Voldemort's behalf, trying to goad them into taking back the ancestral land that was once home to one of the four clans that make up the Kingdom. When they refused, I believe Tom tried to force them. It backfired spectacularly, I must say. The Blood Elves were able to capture a few Death Eaters as well as kill at least half of the Giants who accompanied them before repelling the invading force. My sources in the Ministry there say this might increase the chance of the Blood Elves joining us against Tom. At the very least, they will be able to keep the Giants occupied over there and prevent them from migrating here."

"Are you going to send an envoy?"

"Yes, James, I am. I believe Remus would be a good choice."

"I thought you were sending Remus to go speak to the Werewolf clans in Northern England?"

Dumbledore's eyes focused on James' face. "I believe the Blood Elves might offer more to the werewolf clans than we can. If we can get the Blood Elves on our side, we can possibly increase the chance of having the werewolf clans join us."

Puzzlement crossed the Potters' face. "I don't understand."

"You have heard of the four new arrivals, yes?" He received a nod from James. The headmaster knew Lily had heard about the Suha Siblings through Edward so he continued on. "Only I and Sirius know about this as well as the staff here except for Madam Umbridge. The Suha twins, Damian and Cosmas were both bitten by werewolves when their parents were killed. Remarkably, they have a great amount of control over their transformation. The two of them can shift into their wolf forms even if it isn't a full moon. Sadly though, they still have to shift on the night of the full moon but with less pain than Remus goes through, even to the point of no pain at all on their part. They live in Romania where the Blood Elves live. With a few deductions, I believe the one who taught them how to shift are the Blood Elves."

Realization hit Lily first. "So if you get the Blood Elves on our side, we can ask them to teach the werewolf clans how to control their wolf sides and we can supply the Wolfsbane potion when needed."

"That's brilliant." James breathed, thinking over the time when Remus was plagued by his Lycanthropy curse or 'furry little problem' as he and Sirius called it.

"I believe Remus is already on his way to the Blood Elf Kingdom as we speak."

A highlight in Shyamal's life came on Sunday during lunch. Shyamal, Ron, and Hermione were heading back to Gryffindor Tower to work on some projects for the student group when they came across a large group of students milling around the House Hourglasses.

"I wonder what's going on." Ron looked back at Shyamal and Hermione as he pushed his way through the crowd. "Oy, Gryffindor Prefects coming through!" His eyes widened dramatically as he

caught sight of the adults standing before the large glasses. "Merlin, the Hourglasses all have gems.

"What? Yesterday, there weren't any except for the ridiculous amount in Slytherin." Hermione grunted, pushing her way next to Ron.

Shyamal came up behind them, narrowing his eyes at the rubies, sapphires, emeralds, and amethysts in the bottom half of each Hourglass. "It must be Hogwarts." He whispered. "Remember what she said yesterday."

Standing in front of the Ravenclaw Hourglass was Umbridge who was bright red. Next to her was the smaller Professor Flitwick, who seemed to be holding onto his non-existent temper.

"What is the meaning of this?" Screeched the woman, trying her best to intimidate the shorter professor.

"As I have told you repeatedly, Madam Umbridge, I have no proof of whoever tampered with the Hourglasses. The only definitive answer I can give you is the Hourglasses will only respond to the House Prefects, Professors, and the Head Boy and Girl as well as the Headmaster. Even then, they must be for reasonable deductions or rewards as in accordance with Hogwarts regulations. I will demonstrate: 5 points from Ravenclaw!"

The students held their breath but not a single sapphire shot into the upper chamber. Whispers broke out among the assembled crowd. Usually, when a professor said anything along those lines, the gems would shot up regardless if the deductions or rewards were reasonable, as in the case of Professor Snape.

"I am the Hogwarts High Inquisitor. I am the one responsible for the House point system and the detentions of students within these halls. The Hourglasses for Gryffindor, Hufflepuff, and Ravenclaw must empty!"

Flitwick briefly closed his eyes. "All Hourglasses have reset themselves, Madam, with a hundred points each."

"I believe Professor Flitwick has done everything humanely possible, Madam Umbridge." Dumbledore swept through the crowd, dressed

in red-violet robes with silvery grey stars. He stopped before the Hufflepuff Hourglass. "Never in the history of Hogwarts has this happened before."

Umbridge' already beady eyes narrowed even further. "You have something to do with this." She pointed a pudgy finger at him. "You are in direct violation of a Ministry Decree, Dumbledore."

"I am not in violation of anything. Neither I nor any other professor has tampered with the Hourglasses. And I do not believe a student here has the ability to tamper with it."

Even with Dumbledore's words, Umbridge looked around until her eyes fell on Shyamal. "Y-you have found a way to take your revenge for your sister's detention." Shyamal tensed as she took a step closer, adrenaline beginning to pump into his veins.

"Mr. Suha has done nothing." Dumbledore interrupted his eyes hardening. "Once classes are over, I will have Professors Black, McGonagall, Vector, and Snape check over the Hourglasses for anything Professor Flitwick might have missed. Anything than that will simply be unfounded suspicions. I doubt Minister Fudge will like to see his newly appointed High Inquisitor believing in conspiracy theories while threatening innocent students."

Umbridge drew herself up, patting her hair back into place. "Yes, you are quite right. I believe we can all say the House Cup should be awarded to Slytherin as they are the only ones who did not resort to cheating." Angry murmurs began to break out, quite a few students sending Umbridge ugly looks.

"ON the contrary, Madam Umbridge, the reason I found myself here was due to the House and Quidditch cups are now missing from the Headmaster's office." Dumbledore glanced at the students around them. "Perhaps it would be best for the students to return to their dormitories." He turned to his Deputy. "Minerva, prepare a search of all dorms for the Cups. They are part of a short of collection of heirlooms of Hogwarts."

Shyamal lead Hermione and Ron down a secondary route to Gryffindor Tower. "I believe Hogwarts is taking back control of her halls again."

"I didn't even know she could do that." Hermione squeaked. "I wonder what else is possible for the school to do."

"She is a sentient building." Ron muttered. "I bet she's laughing her rocky foundation in laughter right now."

The rest of Sunday saw the two Gryffindor Prefects spreading the word of the first meeting of their organization on the Seventh floor across from the tapestry of a witch teaching a group of trolls ballet on Monday at 9pm. They had also passed on the instructions to enter the secret room Hogwarts had given them.

Shyamal had also taken advantage of the day to work on Hermione's idea on charming fake galleons with the Protean Charm. Thanks to the spell, the area where the identification number of the Goblin casting the coin was now held the time and date of the meeting. For added protection, Shyamal had added a few extra layers of safety nets to the coins, knowing anything could be possible when you have such a large group of unknown students.

If someone activated the warning system, all of the coins would immediately rust, vibrating and giving off enough heat to warn everyone that the group had been discovered. Another layer was if Umbridge was to touch any coin, the coin immediately melts, burning her hand which would still activate the warning system.

He also had taken the time to set up lesson plans, knowing he would have limited time to teach the Hogwarts students everything they would need to know in a basic duel. Since Professor Black had taken to teaching the basics, Shyamal decided to intensify his own lessons. He knew that the members now knew how to cast the Shield Charm, the Disarming Charm, the Stunner Spell, and a few other simple spells. He knew the purpose was also for the members to protect themselves enough for help to arrive, to teach them how to duel effectively when severely outnumbered.

All of that while studying for his OWL exams.

I must be insane. Shyamal thought as he led Ron and Hermione up to the room on Monday. I think I must be dreaming at the very least. Either that or someone has casted a Compulsion Charm on me.

"Here we are." Ron whispered, glancing at the tapestry where Barnabas the Barmy was leading her group of trolls through another ballet. "The wall opposite the tapestry."

"She said to be specific." Shyamal stated, his eyes drifting over the smooth grey stone wall.

"How specific?"

"Enough for Umbridge and her minions not to find us." Hermione stated firmly.

"Good thinking, Hermione. Let me think otherwise the Room might get confused." Taking one last glance at the wall, Shyamal started walking back and forth. We need a dueling room where Umbridge won't be able to find us. A place where we can learn DADA without Ministry interference. A dueling room enough to fight a group of 40 students from Umbridge.

"Holy-" Ron's voice trailed off.

All three of them stared at the large door that had materialized where the blank stretch of wall had been.

Shyamal stepped forward, reaching for the handle. With a silent swing, the oak door opened. Walking in first, Shyamal took in the large room before him. Bookshelves lined the walls, filled with ancient tomes and rolled up scrolls on DADA subjects. Cushions lined every now and then, ready for the students to come and sit down on them. The middle was raised, large enough for an entire group of 40 people to duel without worry of hitting someone else.

"Merlin's sagging penis!" The trio turned around to see Jordan crumpled on the floor.

"Whoa! Wasn't this a broom cupboard when we were hiding from Filch?" Fred asked, following Jordan through and helping his friend to his feet.

"I could have sworn this wasn't here." George agreed, taking a look around.

"We'll explain once everyone gets here." Ron said, taking a cushion and pulling it to the center of the platform.

Within minutes, the room filled as everyone showed up including a few extra people who Hermione took to the side and had them sign their name on her list. Zacharias Smith was the last one to show and settle down.

Shyamal raised his wand and shot off a small shower of sparks, the small chatter dying away. "Welcome to the first meeting of our little illegal organization."

"Where did you find this place?" Zacharias interrupted, who had chosen to sit well away from Shyamal.

Annoyed already, Ron answered. "We have our sources."

"You don't have to worry, Zacharias, this isn't created by Dark magic. This room has been here for centuries, only coming into existence when a student has a great need and somehow stumbles on it. You all have been told how to summon the Room of Requirement as it's called so do not abuse it. This will be the place where we will hold our meetings. As you can see it has been stocked with everything we need from books and DADA books to medical supplies in case we injure ourselves during lessons."

Shyamal nodded to Ginny who raised her hands. "What will be learning while we are here?"

"Professor Black seems to be doing a good job on handling the basics from the Disarming Spell to the Stunning Spell. Because of the Umbitch, he can't teach us the more advanced spells. I will teach it to you instead as well as other spells I think you will need in dire situations. If you think there is a spell you need desperately in your arsenal, then you can come to me and I will teach it. Just because I'm the teacher, doesn't mean I will stomp on any personal requests, just make the reasonable."

Susan raised her hand. "Can we invite others to join us? I don't think it is fair to keep this from someone else who might need it."

"I know how you feel, Susan." Hermione answered. "But you know the political atmosphere right now at the Ministry. We can't take the

chance someone will squeal to Umbridge about us. The only reason why the people who joined today were allowed to was because I talked to them. Any new members will have to be voted on."

"What makes you think that someone won't squeal in this group?" Zacharias asked snottily.

"The paper you signed is a contract. Even if you tell Umbridge, the parchment will activate and you will have to suffer the humiliating consequences." Hermione said softly, her words making everyone's eyes flick to the scroll she was holding in her hands.

"We made sure the group was covered before moving to this point." Shyamal looked around. "Now, we should get on to business-

"Can we have a name?" Colin asked, leaning slightly forward. "I don't want to keep referring to us as the illegal group or something like that. Makes it seem- bad." A few people laughed, Colin shrugging at his choice of words.

Hermione slowly nodded. "You're right. A name will have a sense of unity and comradeship. Any suggestions?"

"What about the Defense Association?" Cho said, twirling a strand of black hair around her finger, biting on her lip. "That's the whole point of this group."

"Nah, too simple." Lee rebutted, waving off the suggestion. "We need to have some sort of kick of it."

"The Minister is a Wanker Group?" Fred suggesting nudging his best mate, ignoring the fact he was receiving glares from Hermione and Damian.

"Dumbledore's Army?" Ginny suggested.

"Dumbledore raising an army is the Ministry's greatest fear." Hermione said thoughtfully, tapping her quill against her the cushion.

Cosmas started bouncing. "How about the Phalanx?"

Ernie shook his head. "Nah sounds to militaristic."

"I like the sound of Dumbledore's Army better. We can shorten it to the DA." Damian added thoughtfully.

"We are not doing this for Dumbledore. We are doing this for ourselves." Cosmas argued. "Plus someone who hears any mention of Dumbledore with the word Army will run to Umbridge faster than you can summon a broomstick."

"Not if we use the DA." Damian retorted.

Neville butted in before Cosmas could argue on. "The Phalanx Aequitas or the Phalanx of Justice?" Neville suggested. "PA for short."

"How about Fidei Defensor, Defenders of the Faith." Terry suggested.

"Sounds like we're defending the Bible." Justin snorted. "Not that I'm against any religion but I'm not comfortable with it."

"Arcana Imperii?" Hermione saw the looks coming her way. "It means Secrets of the Empire." She clarified.

Shyamal shook his head. "Makes us sounds like we are secrets and not people."

"Arcana Defensor? Defender of the Secrets or Secrets of the Defender?"

"Same argument I think." Cho rebuffed.

"We can change it to Iustitia Defensor, Defender of the Justice." Ginny said. "Since we're doing this to get back Umbridge."

"Oh, I like that. Plus it helps as it can be shorten to ID which stands for identification in the Muggle world." Justin said. "It's like a little piece of material that verifies who you are."

Hala started snorting in laughter. "I thought the whole point was for Umbridge not to discover us."

"Kind of ironic." Damian agreed.

"So all in favor of Iustitia Defensor?" Hermione quickly counted. "Motion passed. We are now known as the Defenders of the Justice."

Shyamal climbed to his feet. "Well, now that's done, I think we should use the last bit of time left to see where you all stand in dueling. Pair up."

Cushions were flung to the side as the group moved to follow Shyamal's orders.

## Chapter Eighteen-I Solemnly Swear

Shyamal knew that Hedwig was still recovering from Edward's so called care, taking care not to startle her. At first, she had been unable to fly very long distances as her wings had atrophied with the lack of exercise and use due to the fact Hedwig had hidden herself into the corner of the store. His siblings' owls Vega, Akane, and Farran had gently forced Hedwig to begin hopping from perch to perch in the Owlery, until she was gliding from the higher ones to the lower ones. By the end of October, Hedwig had taken to flying around the campus grounds with the other three owls. With the arrival of Eclipsis, Hedwig had taken up the job of hunting for her adopted chick until he was flying on his own as well. Even then, Shyamal didn't use her for owl post as his siblings did with theirs which was usually for orders of potion ingredients that weren't in the regular standard kits.

So when Hedwig came into the Great Hall on Tuesday with a note in her beak during lunch, Shyamal was surprised. He removed the note, offering Hedwig a goblet of water which she drank.

"Who's that from?" Ron poured more pumpkin juice for himself, glancing over at the small letter.

When they had left Charms, Hermione had dashed off the library to do extra reading on the charm they had just done, believing it would on their OWLs. Ron and Shyamal had played a game of wizard chess before heading to lunch.

Shyamal flipped it open, seeing the familiar handwriting of Owain on it. "Oh an acquaintance from when I was at Durmstrang. It seems he's finally lonely." He read the note quickly, noting that Owain wanted to meet during that night for an important talk. He slid the note into his pocket, wondering how he would slip Professor Black enough for him to go meet the Blood Elf Prince. "We had a falling out before we left, swore that I was making the worst mistake of my life."

"Sorry, mate." Ron winced, knowing the feeling. "Was he a good friend?"

"Was being the operative word in that sentence." The tone of his voice signaled that was the end of the matter.

"We got Care of Magical Creatures today." Ron grinned. "I wonder what Hagrid has for us today. After all, he does seem to have a knack for bringing interesting animals."

Shyamal raised an eyebrow. "If you can call a Chollina with a bad temper interesting then by all means, consider yourself interested with the next dangerous creature he brings to class."

"You're just mad that the stallion almost hoofed you in the head."

"I wasn't paying attention to its rear end. I didn't know I was stepping on its feathers until it decided to whack me one." Shyamal sniffed. The previous class, Professor Grubby-plank had showed off a family of Chollinas which were a species of winged horses, the race from which the legendary Pegasus had sprung from. The feathers on the Chollinas grew to long lengths but were sensitive when pulled. Because of the interest of everyone regarding the young colt, Shyamal had been pushed against the stallion until his foot was stepping on the long white hairs. It was only his quick reflexes that stopped him from getting hoofed in the head when the stallion reared. After that, Grubby-plank had allowed them to see the Chollinas in groups of five to get near the magical creatures to prevent another occurrence. "I know Hagrid plans to show off the Seraphinas off this Thursday as the end for Chapter 4 on the magical equestrian creatures but do you know what he plans to show today?"

Ron shrugged his shoulders, grabbing another grilled cheese sandwich from the platter in front of him. "He's been very hush-hush about it. I tried to get it out of him when I visited him with Hermione on Saturday but had no luck. He just got this sparkle in his eye." Ron paused. "The bets going around say he'd bring in an Alicorn."

Shyamal gave a chuckle. "An Alicorn? No, that's much to tame for our Keeper of the Keys. If it was Grubby-plank, then I would agree with you but Hagrid doesn't strike me as the type to bring in an Alicorn. I'm thinking more along an Abraxan; big, strong, difficult to control, and only drink the finest of malt whiskeys. Anyway, we should be heading down to the grounds; otherwise we're going to be late. Hermione should be down there after heading to the library."

The two made their way down to the paddocks where Hagrid was, Hermione with him holding an extra book in her arms. But that wasn't what caught Shyamal's eyes. The moment Shyamal saw Hagrid, his mind started coming up with reasons as to why the half-giant had an assortment of bruises. Ugly purplish-black marking with yellowish-green edges lined his entire face. His eyes were slightly puffy as if he had gotten a severe black eye along with the other injuries. Turning to Ron, he muttered. "Yup, it might be Abraxans."

Hagrid's booming laugh rumbled out. "No, Shyamal, it's not Abraxans. The beast I show yer today is in fact a cousin of the Chollinas."

"Would it be an Alicorn?"

"Yer 'ave to wait an' see." Hagrid's black eyes twinkled even more. He patted a large sack at his feet. "They won't stay away once they ge' a whiff of this."

Shyamal sniffed the air, seeing the bottom of the sack was a dark red. "Is that a slab of meat?"

"The finest I could ge' for today. Wouldn't want them to be a no-show." The two fell silent, waiting as the rest of their classmates showed up in small groups. As the last stragglers joined them, Hagrid hoisted the slab onto his shoulders. "Today, yer'll have yer lesson in the forest. Tis the on'y place yer'll see them, if ye can. Stay close." The chatter of the students died down as they slipped deeper and deeper into the forest, following the broad back of the half-giant.

"Hagrid, what exactly are we going to see today." Hermione asked as she stepped over an exposed root.

"Since yer finishin' the chap'er on magical equestrians, I thought it be best if we see this creature as we 'ave a 'erd of them 'ere at 'Ogwarts." Hagrid stopped at the edge of a large clearing. "Wait 'ere." He crossed to the other side and dropped the slab, using his knife to rip the sack open and move the meat out into open. Sliding his knife back into his belt, he moved back before the class.

"All we 'ave to do is wait."

"What exactly do we have to see?" Draco asked loudly from the back of his group, flanked by his goons. "I don't see anything."

"That's because, Mr. Malfoy, only a few people can truly see them." Hagrid started, looping his thumbs into his belt.

"WHAT IS THAT?" Pansy screamed suddenly, pointing a finger at the meat.

At first, nothing seemed to be out of the ordinary but as the class watched, a large chunk of the red meat seemed to disappear then another. Dead leaves on the forest floor rustled as the creature there moved, focusing on the offering of food before it. Shyamal knew what was eating it as he saw the creature the moment it had stepped into the clearing.

Pure white eyes rolled in sunken sockets, peering out from a large skeletal horse head. Bat-like wings stretched from bony shoulders, ribs glaringly obvious as the creature moved over the forest floor. The leathery coat was as black as midnight, light barely reflecting off it.

It was a Thestral.

"Can anyone tell what we're supposed to be seeing?" Hagrid asked, looking over the crowd. Hermione raised her hand and answered. "Tha's right. Take five points, Hermione. The creature 'ere is a Thestral. Most of the Wizarding world believes them to be bad omens. Can anyone tell me why?"

Shyamal raised his, eyes on the creature. "People are afraid of them because the only way to see them is if you have seen death and understood it. Most people mark them as omens of bad luck and death because of that."

"Correct, Take five points, Mr. Suha. Can anyone see them?" Shyamal raised his hand, seeing Neville and Edward raise theirs as well. "The 'erd we 'ave at 'Ogwarts is the on'y ones trained in Britain. They are close relatives of the Chollinas an' distant relatives of the Seraphinas. Mighty fine beasts they are. Can travel faster than any broomstick made by wizard and know the destination even if they've ne'er been there before."

Another Thestral walked out from the forest, joining the first one in eating the slab of meat.

"They mostly feed on dead carcasses in the forest here but for the first few months, they suckle like any other mammal when they're born."

"They're the ones that pull the 'horse-less' carriages." Ron asked, his brain clicking the pieces together.

"That's right, Ron. The horseless carriages are not really horseless."

The rest of the class passed as they watched the Thestrals continued to munch on the meat. For homework, Hagrid assigned them an essay of twelve inches how why breeding Thestrals were so dangerous.

That night, Shyamal found himself with Owain and his escort near the northern boundary of Hogwarts. Damian, Cosmas, and Hala were keeping Sirius busy by forcing the professor to keep them together. They were by the Southern boundary, away from the Acromantula nest and near the area where the centaurs usually were. Theron and Samaria, the escorts for Owain, were keeping a lookout in the trees, just in case Sirius caught scent of where they were.

"What did you want to talk about, Owain?" Shyamal asked quietly, his breath misting in the cold air. The black-purple vault of the night sky arced over them, the blurry brush of the Milky Way sweeping across. Distant stars twinkled in the clear skies, the moon a silver observer.

"The kingdom was attacked last Tuesday and the council has declared war on the Giants two days later." Owain saw the shocked look on Shyamal's face. He pulled his thick winter cloak around him, continuing. "It seems that Voldemort had taken offense of the Blood Elves once again denying his request to an alliance. Father personally thinks he's trying to take advantage of whoever is personating you." His alabaster skin was even whiter in the glare of the moon.

"How many died in the attack?"

"We lost about thirteen Elves because the wizards had a number of Giants with them. The small force lost four Death Eaters with two in custody. The Giants lost another four. Most of the casualties were because of the Giants." A cloud of mist came from his mouth as he continued. "Father is going to meet with the British Minister of Magic. Andrei Mikhail, the Romanian Minister of Magic will also be joining them. His concerns are the British Ministry's ability to contain a hostile terrorist group within their own borders."

"Do you think Mikhail can be trusted? If the Death Eaters penetrated the boundary of the Romanian jurisdiction it might show that there is a chance they could have infiltrated the Romanian Ministry."

"The Death Eaters only concern was the Kingdom because of the mines we hold and the Blood Trees, for reason you don't know why. As for Mikhail, he cares not for money but for the general welfare of the people. I believe he knows that Fudge was elected mostly on the premise that he lets the Death Eaters bribe him into keeping them out of Azkaban. He might use political pressure as a foreign country to get him to own up to his office." Owain paused. "I know we're be focusing on the Giants as they live north of us and the clans that live in Russia, who have been notified of the growing situation."

"Voldemort's sphere of influence is increasing. Having the Giants on his side would triple the problems the Ministry has now; the Giants, this Dark Heir, and the werewolf clans leaning toward Voldemort."

Owain smiled. "I believe the Headmaster has sent a family friend on the way to the kingdom. Possibly due to the success with your werewolf brothers, I'm sure. If the technique is just as successful with others and we side with Dumbledore and the Ministry, it could be the leverage to have the werewolves fight on our side against Voldemort."

"The laws would have to change first and with Fudge being the Minister, I can't see that happening. Too many Death Eaters are close to him. No, we'll have to force Voldemort in the open to get him removed." Shyamal stated with a hard voice, pacing before the older being. "The next in line for the candidacy who we can trust is Amelia Bones of the Department for Magical Law Enforcement and from what I hear; she's a fair and just person, one who we need to lead."

"I'll alert Akane to your view on the situation. She's at the Kingdom, acting as Queen." The Blood Elf watched as the teen continued to pace back and forth, head bowed deep in thought. "Something's troubling you." A snort sounded from the wizard, not breaking stride as he turned around. "What's wrong, Shyamal?"

"It's out of control." The young teen stopped, hands clenching into fists. "Ever since I came here, I feel like everything is spinning out of control. At first, I thought I could sneak into Hogwarts and have us just blend into the wall. But from day one, we've been in the spotlight. I thought I could be a double agent and glimpse into that hag's mind but I couldn't even do it right and now she has her beady eye on me and my siblings, waiting for me to step out of line. I've also attracted the attention of Black and Dumbledore even though they do it from a distance. To pile even more, I'm in charge of an illegal student organization to train the members how to take on Death Eaters." Shyamal raked a hand through his hair, frustration boiling in his chest. "We were just supposed to be here to see what's up!"

"Is that the real reason why you came here?"

"Of course, it is!" Shyamal answered immediately.

The Elf moved in front of his younger friend, leaning forward until Shyamal's eyes were locked with his. "Are you really sure? Or are you really denying your feelings?"

"I'm not denying my feelings." Snapped Shyamal, glancing away, eyes focusing on the dark trees. They snapped back to Owain when he placed his hands on Shyamal's shoulders, forcing the teen to look at him. "Why would I care about them? After what they did to me and my siblings?"

"That's something you should be asking yourself, Shyamal. Obviously, there's something compelling you to do all of this. A reason why you care enough to lead a group of students in learning how to defend themselves from Death Eaters, of placing yourself in situations that could reveal yourself to them."

"What are you saying, Owain?"

The Elf Prince dropped his hands. "I think you want to be caught."

Shyamal's jaw dropped. "If they found out, they might kill me before even thinking of listening to me. They think I'm the Dark Heir and a supporter of Voldemort. Damian and the others count on me to protect them. Would I risk our lives?"

"You and I know that they can handle themselves better than most students in that school. Hala is even good with a short sword and her quiver of arrows. She may be attached to you and jealous that you're making friends with others but she can handle herself. Damian hasn't just been reading medical tomes with Cosmas, Shyamal. You've seen them fight with Miroslav."

"That's beside the point. I didn't want them growing up like I did, forced to look over my shoulder, to learn how to kill and harness the dark side of yourself. I wanted them to have a childhood, to be carefree, innocent."

"They did have a childhood, Shyamal. Can't you see that? If you continue to smother them even further, they won't be able to grow in here and here." Owain placed a hand to Shyamal's heart then moved it to his forehead. "Let them grow, Shyamal. Keeping them babies isn't going to keep them safe forever. And don't deny the fact that you want the same thing as them."

Shyamal closed his eyes, knowing what Owain meant by that last sentence. "I can't trust them again, Owain. Not after what they did."

"Love is a powerful weapon, Shyamal. It isn't just a hindrance." Owain saw the uneasiness rolling off the young wizard so he decided to drop the subject. "What are you planning to do with this Dark Heir person? His presence is frightening the public and forcing Potter to keep up with the demands of the Ministry as well as trying to deal with the bad publicity."

"I was thinking of giving the masses another symbol. Since Edward has his head too far up his arse to see the rest of the world, they really don't have anyone to rally behind." Shyamal pointedly looked at Owain. "I was thinking of engaging him in battle."

Owain groaned. "You have Elven armor. The moment you appear there, Voldemort will suspect that we have joined Dumbledore. You

can't move without permission from the council since it will look like you are acting on their orders."

"I was afraid you were going to say that."

"Just don't do anything. I'll alert the council to your – feelings- and I will see to what they have to say. It might help in pressuring Fudge to do what is right instead of trying to save his lumpy arse." Owain eyed the teen. "I know your phoenix is maturing enough to the point he will begin to be able to flash from place to place. Be careful or you might get seen by the rest of the students."

Shyamal's head tilted to the side as he studied Owain. "You've noticed. He's been getting this quick thing of flaming up more, then settling down. Fawkes has been around to teach him so it might be within the next couple of weeks Eclipsis will begin flashing short distances."

"Don't use him yet and even don't think of using him to flash you to battles." Owain warned.

The teen held up his hands in a calming gesture. "I'll wait for the council's decision. But if he attacks my siblings or Hogwarts, all bets are off."

"Noted. You best be off before the wizard notices you're gone."

Shyamal said his goodbye before shifting into his panther form and gliding across the clearing and disappearing into the trees.

The next day, after dinner, Shyamal was in the boys dorms on his bed, finishing the chapter on magical equestrians when a noise from the door had him looking up. Ron was there with Hermione behind him.

"Can we talk to you for a minute, Shyamal?" Ron asked, the tips of his ears red.

Confusion spread across his features as he closed the book. "Sure." Ron entered, going swiftly to his bed as Hermione, George, and Fred entered who close the door and cast an array of charms over it. "Oh, is it going to be one of those?"

"We figured you didn't want anyone to know about what we're going to say." Hermione shifted as Shyamal's face hardened. He swung his legs off the bed and stood, book dropping on the side table.

"What do you know?" His voice was hard as his eyes started flicking from one person to the other.

Hermione's fingers started twisting the hem of her shirt. "You know about the story we told you about Professor Lupin being a werewolf. Well, during one of his absences, Snape filled in and had us do an assignment on werewolves. Over the year, I started noticing that he disappeared every full moon." Her eyes drifted to the floor as anger clouded Shyamal's face. "I noticed that your siblings disappeared the past two full moons including the one last night."

"She came to us and with some help from our sources; we confirmed that your siblings are werewolves." George said from where he was leaning against Neville's bed.

"What made you want to find out our secret?" Shyamal hissed, furious that someone had found out about his brothers. He didn't care it was his friends; they weren't supposed to know!

Ron spoke up. "It's just how Hermione is, mate. She didn't mean anything by it. Finding out answers is vital to her."

"You're curious? That's the reason why you were wondering about why we were disappearing?" Shyamal had gone from hissing to just under yelling, his tone cold. "If you knew that your professor was a werewolf and he didn't tell anyone, didn't you think it was because he didn't want to risk the whole world knowing? It didn't enter your brains that I didn't want people to know about my brothers because they would be shunned and spit upon if someone ever found out and yapped to Umbridge?"

"N-n-n-no." Hermione stuttered, her head ducking as Shyamal continued to glare at her. Ron got up from the bed. "I was too curious and I wanted to know. I'm sorry!"

"I believe that is not going to cut it."

"Oy, mate, you're out of line." George stepped in, blocking Hermione from Shyamal. "If she has a major fault, it's her wanting to know

everything and not leaving anything a mystery. I know it was wrong of her to inspect your family so to speak, but Hermione still doesn't quite believe that the Wizarding world can be still so unjust when it comes to civil rights."

Shyamal's hands clenched, teeth grinding down. "I do have half a mind to Obliviate the four of you." Ron stiffened as Hermione gaped in shock. Fred and George looked unconcerned even though their hands tightened ever so slightly. "I'm still deciding on that action."

"It wouldn't be good for you, Shyamal. The only way for you to erase Hermione knowing anything would be for you to wipe out her personality and install a new one." Ron lamely joked.

"That can be arranged, Ron." Shyamal sat on the bed, head in his hands. What was he going to do? If they had found out through observation, who else could have put the pieces together and come to the same conclusion? Umbridge was looking for any reason to throw him in jail along with his siblings.

"Um, Shyamal, think you can, uh, control yourself just a bit." Ron's shaky voice broke through his anger. Rising out of the dark mood, Shyamal noticed that the curtains were beginning to flap in a windless breeze, the objects around the room rattling against the oak furniture. The air itself was crackling with barely leashed energy, mostly concentrated around him.

He closed his eyes, taking in deep, calming breaths. Slowly, the tenseness in the air disappeared, the rattling ceasing. "Sorry. I have a volatile temper when things get out of hand."

"Good to know mate." Fred said, breaking out into a grin.

"The only thing we can say now is that we won't tell anyone and if you need some help in covering for your brothers, we can offer our services." George winked at Shyamal, rubbing his nails against his shirt. "We're masters at that type of thing."

"Why don't you create something like a joke for it? You have those things that turn people into canaries. Why not have one turn people into wolf-like creatures."

Fred and George glanced at each other, thinking over Hermione's suggestions. "We can do-"

"-a whole line of-"

"-products with that." They finished together, the mischievous glint in their eyes. "So many animals."

Shyamal interrupted the twins' rant, knowing they could carry on that act for long periods of time. "How did you guys find out about us? We were sure that we were leaving the school without being seen."

"Ah." Fred tilted his head toward his twin. "We have something that ordinary and boring students don't have. Every prankster's dream, in fact." The red-haired twin shoved his hand into his pocket and pulled out an aged looking parchment, a few tears dotting the edges.

Shyamal could immediately sense the magical aura surrounding it, layers upon layers of different charms and spells twisting together. "What is it?"

"The Marauders' Map." Fred grinned impishly. "It seems Filch took it from the Marauders in their last year, believing that someday it would be taken back from the old caretaker. They were right; we took it when he left us one day to go after Peeves who was doing something or other. A good thing too as this has helped us over the years." Fred whipped out his wand and touched the parchment with the tip. "I solemnly swear that I am up to no good."

Black fine line began spreading out from the tip, sketches of stairs, halls, rooms, closets, and other assortment of rooms drew themselves across the dark beige surface. Small black footprints moved all over the place, their respective names following close behind. Shyamal, Ron, and Hermione could see the even the names of the ghosts, Peeves currently creating a ruckus in the dungeons while Sir Nicholas was on the first floor with the Fat Friar.

Placing it carefully on the table, Fred waved for the others to take a closer look at the magical object.

"Oh, look there's Seamus and that girl from Hufflepuff." George pointed out, the two names almost overlapping each other in an isolated corner. "Hmm, good bit of blackmail material right there."

"Don't you dare!" Hermione hissed.

"This is how you got one up on my brothers." Shyamal traced a line but his eyes on the name floating in the private dungeons of Snape; Edward.

"Yup." George flicked the map with a finger. "This bit of parchment shows every single passage in Hogwarts, including several that lead to Hogsmeade but only one is usable."

"Does it show the Room of Requirement?" Hermione traced the outline of the library, Madam Pince sitting at her desk. A group of Ravenclaws are in the back, one moving now and then among the aisles of books.

"No, we think that Room is Unplottable as you can see people entering it but after that, they disappear. They only reappear when they exit." George said, showing them the area where the Room would have been. "It's just a blank wall."

"Do you think there are more rooms we don't know about?" Ron turned the map around so he could see the names. "Ew, I wonder why Filch is with Umbridge. You don't think . . .?"

"Ron you are disgusting!"

"Yeah, bro, did not need that mental image." George's face was scrunched up in mock horror. "I'm going to have nightmares from that, I will!"

"Wonder if Edward has one?" Shyamal said out loud, ignoring the sounds of Fred gagging.

"Probably. I heard Auror Potter asking Professor Black once if Edward still has the map which I think is the updated version."

Fred glanced at his twin before looking at Shyamal. "Why don't you take it? I'm sure you can put it to good use."

Ron's head snapped up. "Oh, and what about me?"

"Exactly what would you have done with it if we had given it to you?" Fred asked, leaning on the table, eyebrow raised.

Ron thought for a minute. "I would say hex Edward and Malfoy but I probably wouldn't have done it."

"My point exactly; Shyamal could use it to keep an eye on his siblings which is a much more greater use than hexing poor unsuspecting students in the hall. Mischief managed!" The Map immediately wiped blank, looking like a regular piece of parchment.

Hermione narrowed her eyes at the twins who were supporting innocent faces. "And what were you doing the past seven years at Hogwarts?"

"That's something completely different, 'Mione." Fred gave her a smile before turning to Shyamal. "No hard feelings then?"

Shyamal sighed, shaking his head. "I can understand why you were curious but it's potentially dangerous for anyone else to know about my brothers. Things could happen to them and I don't know what I'll do if I lose them. They are the only family I have along with Hala. Just keep it to yourselves and don't even hint about it."

Fred mimed zipping his mouth shut and throwing away the key. "Our lips are sealed.

Shyamal nodded. "Thanks for keeping it a secret."

"No problem. There are already too many prejudices around here without adding to it." The Weasley twins stood up and walked out, chatting about adding to their reservoir of pranks and tricks.

"I'm sorry, Shyamal. I should have kept it to myself. You were right about why—" Shyamal raised his hand, silencing Hermione in mid-rant.

"You have to understand, Hermione, I don't trust people very easily because of what happened to us during the first few years after our parents died. Not even my friends at Durmstrang knew about my brothers and I had known them for years." Shyamal sat down on the bed again, thinking over what to do. They were the Gryffindor Prefects for fifth year and Hogwarts but he didn't know them as

themselves. "I'm trusting you with this. If I see any sign that you're about to spill to anyone, I'll Obliviate all of you and damn the consequences."

Hermione paled but nodded. "That's fine. I would do the same thing if I was in your position."

"Well, you now have people covering for you, Shyamal. I'm sure George and Fred will keep an ear out for any rumors regarding Cosmas and Damian." Ron said confidently.

"The only thing I'm worried about right now is the fact about who's going to be testing those pranks now." Hermione poked Ron. "Your brothers better not endanger any students here."

"They test it on themselves first before moving to the people and we have Madam Pomfrey here in case anything goes wrong." Ron gave a hiss as Hermione gave a particularly hard poke in between his ribs.

Shyamal took the Map into his hand, studying it quietly. "Hermione, since you're so curious why don't you help me in creating a better version of the Map? Maybe we can find some spells in the *Espiritus Castellum* that we can use."

"Sure. Maybe Hogwarts can help us out in updating the passages and stuff." Hermione got a glint in her eye. "We can go on Friday over there. There also should be passages from Hogwarts there that might still be in use."

"I'm sure there a few more Unplottable rooms like that teleportation room." Shyamal stated.

"The Founders could have placed one on every floor and in the dorms." Ron thought. "If I was building something as big as Hogwarts, I would make sure all the students could get to the *Castellum* as fast as possible."

"We should go explore the *Castellum* this weekend. Ginny, Damian, Cosmas, and Hala could join us."

Ron turned to Hermione. "Why them?"

"Because they're observant enough to notice that we'd be missing the whole day. Shyamal's siblings almost caught us as we were leaving the teleportation room."

"You know, Hala is attached like a parasite to your hip." Ron commented to Shyamal who shrugged.

"Damian and Cosmas had each other to play with so Hala and I bonded like a makeshift twin. She is my younger sister." And the one I dote upon the most, not that I will tell her. Shyamal thought.

"We'll work on the Map this weekend then." Hermione concluded, standing up. "I'm heading to the library to do some preliminary research. You're coming?"

Shyamal settled back against his bed. "Nah, I have to finish this essay for Hagrid since I didn't do it last night. Was too jittery." Hermione and Ron gave him knowing grins.

"Ron?"

"Same here except I was just too lazy."

"Well, see you two later." Hermione left, closing the door behind her.

Shyamal grabbed the tome from where he had dropped it on the side table. After a while, he let the book fall into his lap, hearing Ron fidget constantly the past few minutes. "Is there anything else you want to say?"

"What do you guys do when you're out there?"

## Chapter Nineteen: Pressure

Cornelius was nervously waiting for the Romanian delegates to arrive. Whispers had been circulating the Department of the Law Enforcement department that the Blood Elves had been attacked by a force that had killed thirteen Elven warriors. At first he had not cared as they were creatures, not human wizards. It wasn't until yesterday that he had found the report on the attack but again he hadn't cared for it, wondering instead about the gala for Christmas Day and who should be on the invite list. It wasn't until Tiberius Ogden had sent memos, calling for an emergency meeting that would be held in Court Room One as the Romanian Minister and the High King of the Blood Elves had requested to meet with the British Wizengamot.

Now, the fifty members of the Wizengamot sat silently in the well lit room of Court Room number one, the benches immaculately clean for the meeting soon to take place. Each wore the plum-colored of their positions, the carefully stitched silver 'W' worn proudly on the left side of their chests. Quills, bottles of ink, and scrolls of parchment littered the small shelf before each member, hands waiting to take down notes. The scribe for the meeting was none other than Percy Weasley was was sitting neatly next to Delores Umbridge who had traveled from Hogwarts to be there for him.

His eyes darted from where he sat in the chair of his office as the Minister of Magic. On his right sat Tiberius Ogden who now held the position of Chief Wizengamot and on his left sat Amelia Bones as the Head of the MLE. He knew he could not count on any of them as they both supported Albus Dumbledore, the wizard who wanted his seat. It was the reason way he had requested the Wizengamot to allow Delores Umbridge to seat on a lower bench with the other Winzegamot members. Out of all fifty members, Fudge knew he could rely on her support.

At length, a pair of Aurors stepped into the room, taking up their posts on either side of the door. The Romanian Minister of Magic and a tall, elderly Blood Elf entered the room side by side, in step as they crossed the small Court Room to the table set up before the Wizengamot.

The Romanian Minister was a tall man, though not as tall as the Elf, dressed in fine silver-grey robes that flowed gently around him. Red,

yellow, and blue threads ran around the edges in delicate designs. His balding hair was slowly turning from a light brown to a dull grey color. His skin was light, lined around the mouth and eyes which were a dark earthy brown. Rimless oval glasses sat perched on his nose.

The Elf was dressed in simple sea green robes with opalescent white threads running around the edge. His silver hair flowed free and straight, golden eyes taking in everything. A silver cane was held lightly in one hand, the other held formally in front. Cornelius' eyes fell on the golden and silver crown adorning his head, eyes drawn to the twinkling diamonds.

Behind them, a pair of Romanian Aurors and two Blood Elf warriors followed behind. All four of them were armed; the Aurors dressed to an almost exact match like their compatriots in the British Auror department except the scarlet robes of the British Aurors were replaced with deep blue robes with a black badge on the left side. Their wands were holstered away probably on their arms.

The Elven warriors were wearing a dark red tunic, with silver-plated black dragon leather vests, boots, and silver helmets that hid most of their faces. A slim scabbard was barely visible on their back, the hilt just peeking from their cloaks. Other than that simple weapon, he could see no other sign of armaments. They stepped into the shadows, taking positions to see the entire room.

Cornelius Fudge stood, clearing his throat before addressing the foreign dignitaries. "Welcome, Minister Andrei Mikhail, King Shahriar Siofra to the British Ministry of Magic."

"Minister Fudge." Mikhail addressed as Shahriar gave a very stiff bow, eyes not leaving the British politician. "I appreciate you accepting our request for a meeting with your Wizengamot on such a short notice but you can agree that these circumstances require immediate attention."

"Of course, of course." Fudge motioned them to take a seat. He waited until they were comfortable before taking a seat himself. "News of the attack on the kingdom of the Blood Elves has reached us."

"Then you must know of the concerns that we have." Mikhail leaned forward, eyes sharpening behind his glasses. "With this attack and threat of future attack, we have now taken a special interest on the events going on here."

"What concern does the country of Romania and a foreign authority have with us?" Lucius Malfoy primly asked, his grey eyes narrowing as the golden eyes of the Elf King swiftly met his. "And does the Blood Elves have any real power in your country?" To those not paying attention, one would not have heard the slight undertone of disgust coloring the man's voice.

Mikhail met Lucius' eyes. "The government of Romania recognizes the kingdom of the Blood Elves as a sole sovereign as per the agreement between us and the humans who lived alongside us which was written and sealed decades of years ago. As a British Wizengamot member, I believe you should already have known this." Lucius flushed slightly at the veiled insult.

Shahriar leaned forward, fingers coming together under his chin as his eyes bored into the sweating Fudge. "Regardless of who wields the greatest authority, we must address the issues we are faced with at this very moment. We have – concerns, you might say - as to the ability of the British Ministry of Magic of keeping a certain threat contained within their jurisdiction, as we have stated before. The two surviving wizards left behind were a part of the group known as Death Eaters, who supported and were loyal to Lord Voldemort, as he calls himself, a man we have learned to have returned just recently to power."

Umbridge coughed, leaning forward. "I'm afraid you are mistaken, King Shahriar. Voldemort is dead. Perhaps the culprit is another." She suggested over the whispers of the Wizengamot.

"We have heard otherwise." The king raised an eyebrow at her. "Who are you, Madam, to speak in at this meeting? I believe there were only fifty members to the British Wizengamot if my training is correct. Yet here are fifty-one members besides those needed to record the meeting."

"I am Delores Umbridge, the Senior Undersecretary to the Minister of Magic and Hogwarts High Inquisitor. I was allowed to partake in this meeting."

"Are you trained as a Hit-Wizard or trained as an Auror to protect this government and the public from threats and chaos?" King Shahriar brushed the glare from the woman. "If you don't have the skills and insight to provide critique on how to better defend this government then allow those who do to discover the best course of action." The whispers turned into loud murmurs, a few of the Wizengamot carried brief smirks on their faces before disappearing behind raised hands.

"Madam Umbridge, you are here as a courtesy at the request of Minister Fudge. If at any time you create a further disturbance, I will have you removed." Umbridge closed her mouth, her face an ugly red color. Amelia nodded to the foreign dignitaries. "You can finish now, Minister Mikhail."

"Thank you, Madam Bones. As King Shahriar stated, we have heard tales of the evil wizard's return and learned that the source of this information was none other than Edward Potter, the Boy Who Lived and who was supported by the Hogwarts staff. You mean to tell us that this is just a rumor?" Mikhail asked, aiming the question directly at Fudge.

The British Minister shifted nervously. "Earlier this year, Edward Potter whom we have trusted previously began spreading lies after the death of his fellow classmate Cedric Diggory, claiming that You-Know-Who had returned. Since then, there have been no sightings of him or any sign pointing to his return."

"Did you verify if his statements of the situation were true? I'm sure I am correct in saying that standard procedures include veritaserum and Penieve memories." Fudge shifted even more in his seat, his eyes glancing around in an attempt to avoid Minister Mikhail's cold eyes. "Well, Minister Fudge?"

"The events following the untimely death of young Mr. Diggory were chaotic, dealing the stricken students of all three schools, the grief of his parents. Surely you must know-

King Shahriar interrupted. "It has been five months since then and you still have yet to support your claim that the tales were false. You persecute the family that has led to Voldemort's first downfall in this

farce of justice. You potentially allow his armies to grow under it while putting the entire family under pressure."

As Fudge fumbled for a bit, Amelia took up the slack. "If the assumption that Voldemort has returned is true, then what will the stance of the Romanian Ministry and the Blood Elves be?"

"The attack on Uaithne provided a look into Voldemort's plans. As there were Giants, I strongly believe the clans of Giants have joined Voldemort. They live in Russia and the northern Carpathian mountains in Ukraine and Poland away from the prying eyes of humans. Because the Giant clans are not recognized by any Ministry, they do not belong to any one country which poses a problem. For us to fight them, we have to request admittance onto the soil of the countries where the clans are. Russia has given us permission to engage any clan that attacks a muggle or Wizarding village. Poland and Ukraine are still deciding if the Giants on their land are under Voldemort's service. Romania is in agreement that any Giant in service to the Death Eaters and their new leader whoever it may be, is a threat and will be dealt with accordingly until either side surrenders." Minister Mikhail took a sip of his drink, allowing Shahriar to pick up the thread.

"Since we are right across from the Giants near the Ukrainian border, we will focus primarily on them which in turn should keep them from joining Voldemort here in Britain." Shahriar fixated his golden eyes on Fudge who now couldn't look away. "In return, we ask that you contribute by finding and dealing with any Death Eater who carries the Dark Mark and is in active service to the new leader."

Somehow, Fudge dredged up enough courage to speak out. "What if we were to deny this tentative alliance?"

Mikhail gave a grim smile. "I assure you that that decision will not bode well for you financially. I am sure that there are a few trades going on between the two countries. It would rather be devastating if they were to fall through."

"King Shahriar." The Elf High King turned around to see a tall man striding toward him, purple robes flaring out, light glittering from the shooting stars running across the length of fabric. "May I have a moment with you?"

"Of course." Shahriar turned to Mikhail who was waiting for him at the elevator. "I will meet up with you for supper as we planned, old friend."

"Be careful, Shahriar. Voldemort's spies are out and about." No one in the office flinched as Mikhail had spoken in Romanian, using the codename the Romanian Ministry had come up with for the British Dark Lord. He entered the elevator, flanked on both sides by his Auror guard.

"If you may." Shahriar bowed slightly, allowing the wizard to lead him off to a private room. They entered one just off the Atrium, out of the way of bustling secretaries, Ministry employees, Auror trainees, and the odd wizard here and there. His eyebrow rose as the silver-haired wizard took a circuit around the perimeter, wand weaving across the walls, floor, and ceiling. Either this wizard was paranoid or he knew how the Ministry under Fudge worked.

"Sorry for the pause but I had to make sure our conversation was not being infringed upon." The silver-haired wizard motioned for Shahriar to take a seat as he did the same. "My name is Albus Dumbledore, the current Headmaster at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry."

"Ah, yes. I remember, you are the one who defeated the Bulgarian Dark Lord Grindalwald back in the 1940's I believe."

A dark expression of guilt and shame crossed Dumbledore's face at this before clearing. "Yes, well, I understand that the Blood Elves and the Romanian Ministry were planning on seeing if roads could be laid to handle the threat of Voldemort and his supporters."

"As you may soon hear, it did not quite go as planned." Shahriar stated. "The Minister is very set in his ways and does not want to deviate at all from his well trodden path for fear of running into a scary monster, one that will not vote for him."

"Sadly, that is true." Dumbledore's light blue eyes firmed. "I wish to seek an alliance with the kingdom and the Romanian Ministry."

"What authority do you have?"

"I am the leader of a group that concerns itself with the preservation of the people and their freedoms; the Order of the Phoenix. We are small, but we are well trained and willing to take the fight to Voldemort if need be."

"You are in charge of a school full of children."

A solemn look crossed the Headmaster's face. "I fear that I may not be in the position for much longer. Minister Fudge seeks to discredit me even further to ensure his hold on the office of Minister. But if that were to happen, it means I can fully give everything to the fight."

Shahriar leaned back in his chair, studying the old man before him. The tales he had heard from the witnesses of the battle between Dumbledore and Grindalwald had been full of adjectives, endearments, and ideals. But rumors of another sort, ones that were ignored by the public at large came to his ears when he had been a teen with his father as the king, the Great Mother bless him. Those rumors did not place the wizard in a good light. "I can tell you this, Dumbledore, as I cannot speak for the Romanian Ministry and her people, but I can provide support in an unofficial capacity." Albus peered at the Elven High King over his half-moon spectacles.

"There are times, where we take in the odd wizard or witch here and there, mostly stragglers who have lost their way. You are familiar with the Suha siblings?"

"Yes, we have had a few altercations with them between other students."

"Mostly with Shyamal protecting his siblings from said students?" Albus nodded. "Ah, Shyamal has been too overprotective of his siblings after the death of their parents, almost to the point of obsession. But I digress. There was another wizard who we took on, slightly younger than Hala when we took on the Suhas. He has stayed with us even though he is of age in most countries. Due to what happened to him early in life, he cares little for the racist and superiority issues of humans who hold such views. He has heard of Voldemort and strongly opposes his belief of Muggles, Half-bloods, mudbloods, and the like. In fact, I have had to make sure that he kept his temper in check as the Blood Elves were not willing to interfere in the dealings of the British Ministry." Shahriar traced the grain in the wood. "If the council is willing, we can have him join you

in your fight against Voldemort." His golden eyes flicked up, catching Dumbledore's.

"But be warned, until the stance of the Ministry changes here, you will not have the full backing of the Blood Elf Kingdom, nor will the wizard should he come here."

Dumbledore slowly nodded, thinking that one fully-trained wizard was better than none. "What is his name?"

"I wonder how long they worked on this." Hermione muttered as her, Shyamal, Ron, and his siblings were in the Castellum, looking over the huge library that completely encompassed the fourth floor. That didn't include the Archives that were in an even large chamber that was hidden below. After asking Hogwarts, they learned that everything held in the two large collections were the magical portion of the knowledge that had once been stored at the Library of Alexandria, secreted away during the siege by wizards who had seen to their duty of preserving the scrolls. The muggle equivalents of the scholars weren't so lucky. The muggle books and scrolls had been burned along with the Library and the Museum next to it.

Ron had to drag Hermione to where they were presently were to stop her from rushing down to the Archives while Shyamal and his siblings watched in amusement.

Shyamal, Ron, and Hermione were huddled around a table next to a large arched window that looked out over the cliff side, the towers of Hogwarts gleaming on the valley floor. Damian and Cosmas had gone off the medical section of the library floor, hoping to see if they find any useful potions, charms, spells, and the like for use. Hala had disappeared to the history of the Founders. For what reason, Shyamal didn't know.

"A good while at least. They had to find all the passages and the words before incorporating them into the Map." Shyamal tapped the parchment, using a spell he had found in a large tome called Revealing Hidden Incantations and Spells that described how to find certain magical signatures left behind by past, latent, and active spells. A layered image appeared above the aging paper, different spells and charms weaving together in a multicolored display; a general tracking spell, some storage charms, bits of spells containing the personality of the Marauders.

"We should work on the formatting of the Map first." Ron suggested, unfolding the Map to its greatest length, stretching to over a meter wide. "Imagine trying to fumble with this during a fight. We should slim it down."

Hermione tapped her chin with a finger, her eyebrows creased a bit. "We can have it respond to touch, shifting the image of school around with a finger. The only problem would be allowing the map to show multiple floors at once and in their entirety while not destroying the quality of the writing."

"We should have the Map be able to identify Death Eaters and Aurors and such." Shyamal studied the 3-D images of the spell weave in the Map. "We're going to have to start from scratch as if we try to mess with this one, everything will fall apart." Seeing Ron's questioning look, Shyamal explained further. "The Map is so old that the spells have actually melded together. If we try to tweak a spell, it'll basically be ripping the spell above and below it apart."

Hermione dug into her school bag, shifting some books around until she pulled out a rather large scroll of parchment. Whereas most scrolls were a foot in length, this one was almost a foot and half and about a foot wide. "We can put the new Map on this." She rolled it out, placing books on each end to keep it open. "First let's get the mechanics down first before we start adding the little details.

Ron studied the old Map. "Let's include Hogsmeade in the map, probably on the same level as the one that will show the entire Hogwarts ground. If You-know-who tried to get into Hogwarts, it'd be through the village."

"Kind of predictable, don't you think?" Shyamal asked.

"Not anymore, Mr. Suha." Came Hogwart's disembodied voice. "Since my awakening, I have been repairing the ancient walls that used to run along the boundary of the school. They have been rising from their foundations for quite some time; however, it will be a while before they reach their full height."

Shyamal shared a glance with his friends. "Do you think you can provide the entire information on the layout of the school?"

"I can. First you must set it up before I can begin to update the Map first."

"Too bad you can't design it for us." Ron muttered as he got up to search for more books.

"How exactly are we going to be able to identify Death Eaters from students, Aurors, professors, and the rest?" Hermione asked.

"The Death Eaters are marked with the Dark Mark as you know. The only trouble will be able to scan one long enough to design a tracking spell." Shyamal knew that each spell had its own signature and the Dark Mark was no different.

"Professor Snape has one." Hermione murmured, fingers now tapping against the table top. "Can't see him allowing us to scan it."

Shyamal snorted. "Well, I don't plan on going to Azkaban and doing one there." He stopped, watching Ron as he came back with a pile of books. "We're going to have to find a way for us to scan Snape's."

Hermione's eyes bugged a little. "Shyamal, that's suicide. If Snape was to find out, we'd be expelled."

"Whoa, whoa, what's this about Snape?"

"He wants to find a way to scan the magical signature of Snape's Dark Mark so we can use it to identify the Death Eaters if they were to enter the school."

"I have to agree, mate, that's suicide."

"We can come back to that problem later. As for the Aurors, it's a little easier. All Aurors have badges with them which are also specially made for the Ministry with tracking charms with the lists being updated at the Head Office." Hermione shrugged her shoulders. "It's a way for the Head Auror to keep track of his or her men."

"We'll we can always scan the one that Professor Black keeps in his desk." Before Shyamal could say anything else, the three of them heard a commotion from where Damian and Cosmas had gone off to.

Damian entered the room on his stomach, sliding against the marble with a sound that caused Ron to wince in sympathy. Cosmas came in more gracefully, stumbling against the wall as he barely was able to keep himself from falling. In his hand, he could see a scroll that was a light grey color.

"Shyamal! We have something you want to see." Cosmas yelled, bouncing rather quickly to his feet and crashing into the table. Not caring that the Marauders' Map was there, he placed the other scroll on top of it and rolling it open.

Spidery black ink run across the weird colored parchment, the entire document looking like something Shyamal would see in his potion book. "I see it. What is it?"

"It's a basis for a possibly new medical potion." Damian huffed out, a hand on his stomach as he tried to regain control of his breathing. "One that could revolutionize modern magical medicine as we know it!"

"It's always been believed that any virus, magical or muggle, would be an almost impossible feat to cure because of how they work on a genetic level." Cosmas added. "To become a werewolf, you have to be infected by one on a full moon, during which the virus that causes lycanthropy is fully active. The Wolfsbane potion works on the genetic material of the brain, the only potion known to be able to work on those infected with lycanthropy due to its ability to bypass the blood barrier around the brain."

"Anyway, we were looking through the books in the medical section when we came across this." Cosmas waved a hand at the innocuous scroll.

Shyamal glanced at it before turning back to his siblings. "Still don't know what it is."

The Suha twins glanced at each other then back at Shyamal. "This might lead to the discovery of a cure for lycanthropy!"

The night was falling.

Hermione, Ron, and his siblings had gone back to Gryffindor Tower to finish homework that would be due soon. Well in Hermione's case, to start homework that was due at the end of the week.

He had followed them back to pick up some things and drop off others except for the Marauders' Map. The copy of the scroll that his brothers' had found was now sitting securely in his trunk, underneath other items that he wanted to keep from prying eyes.

Shyamal dug through the stained pages of the ancient tome before him on war spells. After the news of the discovery, Shyamal had gone off in search of Hala when a large Eagle owl had swooped in long enough to drop its letter.

There were only three words on there in Shahriar's familiar script.

Prepare your armor.

From those words, Shyamal knew that Owain was able to alert his father to his intentions. It also meant that the High King had found a way that might allow Shyamal to fight without revealing himself; the only thing he had to do now was wait for confirmation.

He paused at a page showing the moving figure of the spell the chapter was focusing on. Peering at the picture, he could see the grey wizard jumping out of the bed, a bubble appearing next to his head with the words 'Celo Ferratus'. The next second, the nightshirt the wizard wore was disappearing, his ancient Auror robes appearing, the thick dragon cloak hampering his movement as he moved out of the picture. Shyamal looked away, staring out of the window as he thought about the spell.

It would solve a lot of problem if he stored his Elven armor in something that he would wear constantly. If he didn't use it, it would take time for him to simply put the armor on. The problem of keeping it close would also be solved, lessening the chance that someone might see it as well. Turning the page, he read the basic diagnostic of the spell.

The first component of the spell was that he would need something to store the suit of armor in, like a bracelet or a necklace, or even an earring. Next, he would have to actually put on the Elven armor without anything else so he could store it along with a memory of his

body shape. If he didn't do that step right, his clothes would just appear, potentially appearing inside his stomach, chest, or any other vital area. Once the charm was set, he would then have to weave another spell; the Robe-changing charm so the item could switch his current set of clothes for the Elven armor inside the storage unit.

Simple enough.

Shyamal stood up, proceeding to take off his Hogwarts robes, draping the red and yellow scarf over the high backed chair. Pulling the locked box he had taken from his trunk earlier, he opened it with another password, the top springing open. Inside were the shrunken pieces of the armor.

He slipped on the simple undergarments followed by the dark red clothing, consisting of a tunic shirt that came down to just above his knees and slightly baggy pants with silver threads running around in simple designs. Next, he withdrew the black dragon leather vest, gauntlets, and boots. The vest was formed in the basic style of the armor of the Roman Empire; the lorica segmentata. Mithril plating on top of the leather gave added protection to the spell resistant dragon hide against blades and clubs. With delicate care, he pulled the item he intended to use out of the vest and laid it carefully against his chest.

He slipped on his dragon-hide, mithril-plated boots which were more comfortable than the shoes he had been wearing to Hogwarts. He checked to have his tanto blades secured firmly in the small slots on the outside edge of the footwear.

The dragon hide belt was next, going around his waist to secure the middle of the tunic firmly. The slim, light, sword slung from his back, the dark red cloak hiding it except for the simple leather handle. A shorter blade, twelve inches in length, went on the left side of his belt. Next to the small scabbard was an empty wand holster. The armored gauntlets went on next. Unlike the armored front of the lorica segmentata, the mithril plating was limited just enough to allow full flexibility of his fingers, hands, and wrists. Finally the helmet went on, his eyes staring out of the eye sockets.

"Hope this works." He picked up his wand carefully, uncomfortable with using it with the gauntlets on. "Celo Ferratus!" A bright white-

blue light flashed around him, the Elven Armor disappearing. Shyamal blinked, looking down at himself.

All the components of the armor were gone, not even the garments were on him. Smiling he quickly placed his wand back on the table to redress in his Hogwarts robes. Fully dressed, he removed the necklace, casting the Robe-changing spell. Casting another diagnostic spell on the necklace, he saw the spells settle nicely.

"Hogwarts?"

"Yes, Shyamal?"

"If anything is to happen to me, get Damian will you?"

"What about your other siblings?"

"Damian won't ask questions like Hala and won't crack jokes like Cosmas." Shyamal picked up the necklace and retied it around his neck. Holding his wand in his right hand, Shyamal closed his eyes, whispering the final spell in his head, pushing his magic into the necklace. At first, there was a resistance in the necklace against his throat which only lasted a second before giving way.

He felt a breeze sweep around his body, from the top of his head to the bottom of his feet. Opening his eyes, he looked down just in time to see his shoes fade out, his boots replacing them. "Hmm, going to have to work on the timing." He checked over the armor, not seeing anything out of place. He whispered the spell again, pushing his magic. This time he could see the clothes shifting into phase as the armor disappeared.

Satisfied with the results, Shyamal closed the tomes he had been using, Banishing them back to their place on the shelves.

If everything worked out, the Dark Heir wouldn't know what hit him.

## Chapter Twenty- Elven Justice

Tuesday saw Remus preparing himself for the day. He had arrived the previous Friday with the ragged luggage he had back from third year. The Blood Elves had taken kindly to his arrival, giving him a bed in one of the rooms in the public bedrooms in the royal palace. He had spent the weekend walking around the immediate area with Sorin Stela, a Blood Elf, learning a little about the culture and traditions of the magical race that were not written in the books sold in Wizarding book stores.

The werewolf checked over his clothes, a simple robe that he had bought at Madam Malkin's with the money James had given him. Remus flushed at the memory, severely uncomfortable with the charity. Before Severus had snidely commented on his lycanthropy in front of a couple of older Slytherin students, he had been able to find steady jobs in tutoring magical children who stayed at home instead of going to Hogwarts. Afterward, no one would bother hiring him, despite the fact that he was the best friend of the Head Auror and an honorary uncle to the Boy Who Lived. Nothing was good enough to overcome the shadow of the fact that he was a werewolf.

James had helped him so much, covering the fine that the Ministry had levied on him when he had been forced to register himself as a werewolf. His best friend had also given him food and board at Potter Manor when his tenant had kicked him out. People on the streets would scurry around him, eyeing warily like some dangerous animal. His friends outside from the Potters and Sirius would no longer talk to him, stating quickly that they had some unfinished business to attend to somewhere.

But that could change.

Albus had told him of the two werewolves now studying at Hogwarts who came from Romania that they had learned to control their inner wolves with help from the Blood Elves, something that was unprecedented in the magical community. If he could at least control some aspect of the inner monster, Remus would find this mission successful.

He only hoped it was enough to win the werewolf clans from Voldemort's side.

Most of those who had joined Voldemort had done so as they believed a reign under the Dark Lord would more bearable than the rigid control and continual degradation under the current Ministry. Remus knew that the moment the war was won, Voldemort would turn on all races that were less than pureblood wizards but the werewolf clans refused to even think about it. The lone werewolf knew that Fenrir Greyback loved the free rein Voldemort gave him, as the wizard was in fact a psychopath. The crazed werewolf loved the taste the human blood and the ecstasy of the hunt itself.

A knock at the door brought Remus out of his dark musings. Going to the door, Remus saw his Blood Elf guide standing there, dressed in a green tunic and white pants. Sorin smiled at him. "Hello, Remus. Are you ready?"

"Yes, just give me a moment to collect my things." Remus went to the table, quickly grabbing his small satchel that carried his journal and writing utensils and cloak. Closing the door behind him, Remus followed Sorin down the halls. "Where are we going today?"

"The two prisoners captured from the attack more than a week ago have fully recovered from their wounds. The woman Death Eater will no longer be able to walk with the wounds she received to her back but nonetheless, she will face the court today along with her companion." Sorin answered, turning down a grand staircase that circled a large Blood Tree. On the way down, they passed a few soldiers dressed in light infantry armor who were patrolling the halls. Sorin nodded at them as the guards walked up.

"Will you keep her here in your kingdom or have her transported back to England for imprisonment? What about her fellow Death Eater?"

"It will depend on the sentence she will be given today." They approached a double door guards in infantry armor. "Remember our justice system is not like yours." The doors opened silently, Remus frowning at the ominous warning.

The court room of the Blood Elves was constructed similar to an arena, the seating quartered evenly into four sections. The quarter opposite of the doors were separated from the rest as they held the representatives of the Houses and officials of the government. The

three lowest rows held the court itself which included the Iuria, the Judge, and the court scribe. The Iuria consisted of fifteen randomly picked Elves who would hold the lives of the prisoners in their hands, deciding the final sentence of those on trial. The remaining three quarters were now filling with interested Elves from the surrounding lands. Remus' sharpened eyesight caught sight of a few Romanian officials in the lowest public seating opposite of the court.

In the sunken middle section were D-rings and simple chairs, unused at the moment. They were similar to the chairs kept in Courtroom Ten at the Ministry.

Sorin and Remus settled themselves on one of the highest rows next to the door, overlooking the court. The door in the Royal section opened, King Shahriar walking to his seat with Akane by his side. The chair set aside for the Elf Prince was left empty, signaling his absence from the trial. The Iuria began arriving, dressed in simple black robes with silver lining. The judge entered in his white robes, a white stole falling from his shoulders, face hidden in the depths of his hood. The Lords of the Houses were wearing elegant black robes with their respective crests stitched neatly over their left breast.

"How long will the trial take? Remus asked softly, the public seating a quarter full.

Sorin leaned closer to the werewolf. "Unlike most justice systems, any prisoner caught on the battlefield is immediately guilty, a status that waives all human rights. Officials from our justice system will immediately pull copies of all their memories into special basins for later analysis by the Iuria. As they go through them, the officials will take note of any significant event that is important to the person's character as well as to the crime itself. If there are mitigating circumstances, the sentence may be lessened or even dropped. But if the memories prove the person acted of their own free will, then they will receive full punishment. During peace times, criminal justice is a little harder to describe."

"But isn't that invading the rights of the individual?"

"It is war, Remus. People live and die on the battlefield; one less man to fight." Sorin studied the man beside him. "How many times would you have had to fight if they were sentenced in your justice system?"

"Azkaban is the securest prison in the world."

"You would have to assume they are actually found guilty and sent there. How many Death Eaters were sent after the first war? We have heard the Dementors are growing restless, demanding that they be allowed to feed. How long will they stay loyal to the Ministry when all they have to do is switch sides so they can feed indiscriminately? I'm sure you want to do the right things, Remus, but sometimes doing the right things isn't doing the right thing."

Remus straightened up, amber eyes flicking back to the court whose members were now accounted for. The judge stood up.

"This trial will come to order. Bring in the prisoners." The judge commanded. There had to be a set of doors under section he was sitting in as a group marched out from under the rows to the center of the arena. The woman Death Eater was sitting in a wheelchair that rolled by itself, no doubt under the control of one of the guards. The male Death Eater was walking unassisted, supporting no wounds that Remus could see from his view point. The guards sat him down on the chair, anchoring the chains from the shackles around the man's wrists to the D-rings on the floor. The woman's chains were anchored as well.

Before the judge could continue, the woman started yelling, spittle flying from her foaming mouth.

"You will ALL die! The Dark Lord will crush you all and there will be no mercy for filthy creatures like you!" The woman spat, her upper body struggling against the mithril chains. Her hands strained to pull themselves from the shackles. "Your insignificant kingdom will fall like toothpicks before the Dark Lord's vast army!"

"Silence her." The guard next to the woman jabbed around the neck, her rant stopping in midsentence. Her fellow Death Eater was quiet.

Remus leaned over to Sorin. "What did they do?"

"Magical pressure points, similar the muggle style from the East. I suspect they just locked her jaw muscles shut. It still allows her to breath." Sorin whispered back.

"Alecto Carrow, you were captured during the skirmish at Uaithne. Memories taken from your mind prove that you are responsible for the deaths of Doru Cosmin and Emil Horea. You are hereby sentenced to death. However, due to your condition, normal tradition cannot be carried out. Instead, you will be executed by beheading by the House of Cosmin and burned by the House of Horea."

"Silas Jugson, you were captured during the skirmish at Uaithne. Memories taken from your mind prove that you are responsible for the deaths of Crina Decebal. You are hereby sentenced to death. You will be executed under Blood Elf tradition of a fight to the death. If you win, you will live out your days secluded from the rest of society."

Remus was horrified. A fight to the death? "Should they just kill him? Why risk the life of a Lord of a House?"

"It's an ancient tradition during times of war." Sorin answered. "Dignity before death; it gives the prisoner a chance to die honorably by the sword or live naturally to their dying day. As for the risk of life of a House Lord, how many people in your magical community practice with a sharpened blade?"

"Hardly any." Remus admitted.

"There's a reason why we are called Blood Elves." Sorin grinned darkly.

"Prepare the arena." The judge ordered.

Guards stationed around the lower seating area stepped up to their posts, arms weaving in the air. A shimmering dome of blue began rising from the raised floor, arching above them to enclose the arena below. The blue dome flared before fading to almost clear blue color. The two guards on either side of Alecto Carrow directed her wheelchair out, disappearing back underneath the stands. The guards with Silas Jugson began unlocking the shackles. The chair disappeared, leaving the area open.

Out from under the court seats, a third door opened, an Elf dressed in a black and white tunic appeared, carrying a sword.

One of the guards pulled out his sword, handing it to Jugson before leaving with his partner out under the door under the public seating.

"Begin."

"Give me my wand and I'll give you a real fight!" Jugson yelled, circling away from the approaching Elf. "Stupid creatures! You can't even fight decently with magic! You don't deserve to live!" The Death Eater swung his sword only to be met by his opponent's. The metal clanged, the Elf Lord pushing the man back until he fell from sight. The next second, Jugson was flying through the air to land on his back before the court. The sword followed, clattering to a stop before Jugson.

He scrambled to his feet, holding the sword before him. His face was pale, sweaty. "Wretched creature." Jugson spat at the feet of the Elf. The Lord came again, sword glinting as it swung upward, Jugson trying to block. The Death Eater was thrown off balance by the blow. The Elf Lord moved again, driving the blade deep into Jugson's stomach. Remus closed his eyes. A few seconds later, he heard something wet thump to the floor.

"Bring in Alecto Carrow." Remus opened his eyes, watching as the final Death Eater was brought in. She was struggling again, her jaw still locked from the spell. The guards stopped her in the middle of the arena, grabbing her by the arms and dragging her to the floor on her knees. One guard grabbed her arms, removing the chains and securing them behind her back with his own. The second guard walked out of the arena, guiding the wheelchair out.

A second Elf Lord came out, dressed in pure black. In his hand was his own sword. He walked calmly, taking his position next to Carrow. From where he sat, Remus saw the second Elf Lord look to the judge and King. The judge nodded; the King did not move.

The Elf Lord raised his sword before bringing it down on Alecto Carrow's neck, neatly slicing off her head. The bloodied object fell to the ground, blood squirting out from the sliced arteries and veins.

"The court sees this case closed." The Judge motioned for the guards to take the bodies away. The Elves began filing out, whispers breaking out among them. The King himself sat quietly in his chair, watching the guards picking up the two corpses and laying

them on gurneys, waiting to be taken to the Mortuary. The two Elf Lords in the arena moved together, talking quietly. A third came out and joined them.

"Come, the King will like to you." Sorin said. Remus followed the Blood Elf out the doors but instead of going down the same hallway they came through they turned to the left down a narrower hall.

"What will happen to the bodies?"

"The Lord of the House of Horea will oversee the burning of Carrow's body and scatter her ashes in some unnamed region. The same will happen to Jugson's body but by the House of Decebal. In our society, the absence of a burial site is one of the highest insults, similar to the tradition of the Romans in the Muggle world."

The pair entered a garden which looked to be set in the mountain side. One side was an open view over the canopy of the Blood trees, a few houses visible here and there.

"And it is here I will leave you." Sorin announced. "The King only wishes to speak with you so I will attend to my duties elsewhere. Once he is finished speaking with you, I will return and escort you back to your quarters."

"Would you mind on finding books on the justice system for your kingdom? I would like to see how it differs between the justice system of my government and yours." Remus asked.

"As you wish." Sorin gave a small bow which Remus returned before leaving the werewolf in the garden.

Remus approached the marble railing, leaning against it.

The cool mountain air swept past him, bringing in the familiar scent of the forest with it. Remus closed his eyes, trying not to see the images of the two Death Eaters lying in the pool of their own blood. To him, so used to having criminals given the Kiss, it felt more violent.

"You are troubled." Remus spun around to see the Blood Elf King there, his golden eyes staring into his.

"A little."

"Perhaps it would have been prudent of me to have Sorin give you details on our court system." King Shahriar moved to join Remus at the railing. "I spoke with Headmaster Dumbledore before I left the Ministry. We discussed a few things regarding Voldemort and relations between the Blood Elf Kingdom and your Ministry. Cornelius Fudge is adamant that the Dark Lord is dead and another Death Eater is the one in charge of these attacks, more specifically the one called Harry Potter."

Remus winced. "All they have is a witness claiming after he spoke. It means nothing."

The King stayed quiet for a moment before speaking. "Because of the ignorance of your Minister, the Blood Elves will only focus on the Giant clans near our borders. Russia has already given us reports of suspicious clans that are moving toward their western border. The moment, a muggle or wizard is killed by them our legions will march and engage them. Poland and Ukraine has agreed to the same conditions as Russia. The only stipulation is that we ensure the secrecy of the magical world is not place in jeopardy. As for the second issue we discussed, we have agreed to let one of our refugees fight. He will be arriving here soon to meet with me. If he agrees, then he will head to England to assist your Aurors in the battles against the Death Eaters."

"Will I meet him?"

"For his safety, no. Due to the absence of an alliance between us and your Ministry, he will be forced to work alone. If he is caught by the English Aurors, he will be left alone. The same if he is caught by the Death Eaters."

Remus was unsettled. The Blood Elves would allow one of their own to fight a war by himself, leaving him to his devices. He wasn't even sure if the Order should be allies with the Blood Elves if they were so cold. "I see."

"We also talked about the Suha siblings, specifically regarding the two werewolf twins. Albus told me you are a werewolf."

"Twenty-nine years this winter."

"I do not know if the training will work with you. The Suha brothers were young and newly infected with the werewolf virus. At such a young age, the mind is more easily trained in meditation and mental discipline." Shahriar turned to Remus, looking him over. "However, Albus tells me out of anyone he knows, you are the most self-aware individual he has met."

Remus lifted his head, amber eyes hard. "I'm willing to try this method to the fullest extent I can."

King Shahriar gave him a dark smile. "We will see if you can face your inner beast, Remus Lupin."

## Chapter Twenty-One: Target Sighted

"What happened between you and Ferdinand?" Hermione asked, dodging a Bat-Bogey Hex from Ginny as they practiced. Shyamal was walking about the room, offering basic dueling stances and dodges. The students were using stinging hexes, light punching spells, and Shield charms during this ID session.

It was their third meeting so far and every single person coming to the meetings were showing noticeable improvement. Even Neville who was one of the slowest students in their year was gradually improving under Shyamal's tutelage and Zacharias who complained at every advice.

Between Hermione's pleas and the looks the Hufflepuffs were giving him, Shyamal had conceded to let a few more members join but only after he had personally talked with them. No one knew of course that Shyamal had wiped one potential member's memory after learning that person was hoping to reveal them to Umbridge in hopes of getting immunity from the ever increasing audacity of the Inquisitorial Squad.

"He didn't like the fact that I was putting the Quidditch practices in front of him. So he decided to look for another girlfriend." Ginny shrugged.

"I can't believe that git." Hermione said indignantly. "Didn't he tell you that he wasn't going to hold that against you?"

"At least I know his true colors. If it happened further down the road, it would have probably have more painful consequences."

Hermione twirled her wand, a punching hex shooting to Ginny's side but the red-head quickly jumped to the side. "Are you going to look for a boyfriend right now?"

Ginny shook her head. "Not right now but that doesn't mean I can't look no?"

"I get you there girl." Hermione grinned. "You know, Seamus' accent can be sexy at times."

Ginny laughed, not able to bring up her shield in time to block Hermione's next hex. The magical sting underneath her ribs made her laugh even harder, wand lowering. "He's cute but he's too feisty for me with all the Irish blood. I prefer someone more controlled of themselves I guess." Ginny shrugged her shoulders. "All I really know is what I don't want in a man. What about you, Hermione?"

"Hmmm, someone who can let me be what I am. Most don't like a really studious girl, you know. You do have to agree that Roger Davies does look hot in his uniform." Hermione grinned as Ginny spluttered.

"Nah, not my type. What about Anthony Goldstein?"

Hermione thought it over. "He does have a way of chewing on quills; Justin Finch-Fletchley from Hufflepuff?"

"Too timid." Ginny's eyes starting roaming the Room. "Oh, what about Shyamal? He does have this mysterious air about him. Plus he's hot!"

"My brother is oblivious to girls." Ginny jumped back slightly, wand moving but she saw that it was only Hala Suha who had spoken.

"What?" Hermione asked, walking until she was next to Ginny.

"My brother, Shyamal; there's a reason why he hasn't dated any girl in Durmstrang nor Hogwarts even though they tend to fight over him. He doesn't pay attention to what girls are doing." Hala shrugged her shoulders. "I always believed he just didn't have time to date you know but I've been noticing he's been watching the boys a lot."

Ginny looked confused for a second before blushing. "Oh!" She sighed. "The good ones are always taken or gay. Well, I can always look still."

"Sure." Hermione studied the smaller girl before her. It looked like Hala was glaring at Ginny for one second and the next, looking innocent. "Have you made any new friends since you've started here, Hala? I haven't seen you with Shyamal the last couple of weeks."

"Oh, I've a study group. I wanted to focus on the subjects here while my brothers focus on the sports." Hala waved for her partner to

come over. "This is Jack Sloper; he's been helping me with my Transfiguration project for McGonagall."

"Hala is good at potions so it works both ways." The small boy said shyly. "We just started studying last week."

"Snape and McGonagall were always hard for me." Ginny said.

"Oy, are you guys practicing?" Ron stepped over with Shyamal.

"We were just talking about studying." Hala answered.

"Hopefully about the spells we will be using?" Shyamal crossed his arms, raising his eyebrow at his younger sister.

"Maybe." Hala smiled back.

Suddenly Ron smacked his head. "Talking about school, the next Hogsmeade trip is next Saturday. Anybody care to join us for a drink in the Three Broomsticks? I can do away with Umbitch."

"You and everyone else here." Ginny replied.

"She's been getting worse. Her detentions have started to become borderline Dark." Hermione huffed. "I found another victim today with the words 'I will not sleep in DADA' etched into the back of her hand. That vile woman is going too far with the powers the Ministry has granted her."

Shyamal frowned. "That sounds like –"

"– A blood quill I know." Hermione shook her head. "I can't believe the Headmaster doesn't know."

"Have you tried telling him?"

The Gryffindor prefect blushed. "No."

"You should. If nothing happens, then we'll have to take actions." Shyamal checked the time. "It's getting late. We should be heading back to our Common Rooms." Shyamal pulled out the Map, making sure Argus was in his office and Umbridge in her quarters before releasing the students in groups of five or less.

Shyamal studied the students around him as he carefully brewed his Eye-Clarity Potion. As usual, he had taken his normal seat right on the borderline between the two Houses; Gryffindor on his right and Slytherin on his left. Goyle was sitting to the left of him, looking away from Shyamal. His loyal companion Crabbe was sitting in front on the upper left seat from Shyamal. Directly ahead of Shyamal sat Hermione with her cauldron bubbling nicely, her potion a pale lilac. Behind Shyamal sat Ron with Blaise Zabini next to him in the lower left seat. Edward Potter was in the back room, glaring into his cauldron. Neville was sitting next to Shyamal on his right, Lavender Brown behind him and Dean Thomas sitting in front. All three were slightly turned away from Shyamal that day.

Professor Snape was staying true to his habits, gliding around the classroom, offering advice to Slytherins who were lagging behind or insulting Gryffindors who were in the same predicament.

Because Shyamal was tilted slightly toward the Slytherin side he could keep an eye on the students. Ron was flicking his eyes to Shyamal every now and then, waiting for Shyamal's signal.

Hermione had objected at first, worried about the risk of getting caught by the Potions Master if the plan should fail. It seemed they had a similar plan back in their second year when they believed Draco Malfoy was the heir of Slytherin, going as far as disrupting his class to secure a bag of boomslang skin for the Polyjuice potion they were brewing.

Edward had been threatened by Snape after the destruction had been cleared the greasy-haired man believing the Boy Who Lived had something to do with the event that caused various parts of the students' body to swell. Of course, Edward had denied knowledge of it.

Shyamal had assured them, the risk of them getting caught would be low as he had cast a Notice-Me-Not charm on the Erumpant horn that now sat in Ron's book bag. Shyamal had one in his own book bag.

The bushy-haired girl pointed out that they hadn't been targeting the Potion Master himself in second year.

Shyamal had only replied that accidents happen.

"Potter! What are you doing?" Snape hissed, back to Shyamal. As the class turned to watch the scene unfolding before them, Shyamal caught Ron's eye, waving his hand to Goyle.

The red-haired boy bent slightly, hand slipping into his bag and pulling out the horn. Shyamal slid his horn out of his bag, turning slightly to Neville's cauldron. Already, the Erumpant horn slices Neville had sprinkled in there a few minutes were reacting with the acidic hellebore, the surface of the potion beginning to bubble wickedly. With a final look around the classroom, Shyamal flicked the horn into the cauldron, the object sinking quickly beneath the surface. Neville hadn't noticed the plop of the horn hitting the surface, disguised by the popping of the bubbles, still looking at Snape who was lecturing Potter. Turning back around, he saw Ron sliding into his seat, hands clenching tightly into fists but with no horn in sight.

The reason why Shyamal had chosen an intact Erumpant horn was because the horn was known to highly combustible, the caustic acid inside volatile even under safe conditions. The male bulls were known to die due to their horns exploding when they were in their mating drives. It would only take a few minutes for the acidic potion to eat its way through the horn shell and react with the explosive liquid inside.

"You will receive zero points for today, Potter. I will talk with your mother in regards to lack of attention to detail in this class." Snape waved his wand, Vanishing the contents of Potter's cauldron. "You will write me a 24 inch essay on the use and safety requirements of the Erumpant Horn in potion making, due next class."

"Yes, sir." Edward's jaw was twitching as he moved to put his things away.

The minutes began ticking down in Shyamal's head, his hands moving to pour a little bit of

Then -

BOOM!

Neville's cauldron was the first to go off, the contents exploding outward. The students around him dove behind their cauldrons. Some of the slower students weren't so lucky.

It couldn't have been timed any better.

Snape was assisting Pansy Parkinson on her Draught when Neville's cauldron had gone up. He was moving past Goyle's when the second Erumpant horn had exploded. Snape was picked up by the concussion wave and thrown hard against the dungeon wall. The room was in chaos, girls screaming on both sides, everyone huddled under their desks as noxious fumes began pouring from the two ruined cauldrons.

Hermione stood up. "Clear out! Someone go get Madam Pomfrey and a Professor!" The Gryffindor prefect ordered. The Slytherins were the first out the door, no one picking up their fallen Head of House, all thanks to the compulsion charm Shyamal had cast at the fallen man.

As the room emptied, Ron and Shyamal cast Bubble Head Charms on themselves before making their way to the Potions Master. Hermione covered them as she made sure everyone was heading toward the hall. Shyamal picked up the left arm, pulling on the sleeve until the Dark Mark was revealed in its full horrific glory.

"Damn, never thought it would be so ugly." Ron whispered.

"Everyone's out." Hermione said.

It was. The black tattoo seemed to have been carved into the flesh itself. The greenish black snake weaved its lithe body out from the grinning mouth of the black skull, the two ruby red eyes glaring at them.

Standing up, Shyamal pointed his wand at Snape, calling up on some of the Elven magic he was taught to hide the magical signature of the spell he would be using. "Sopor." A jet of silver light flew into Snape's chest. "Come on, let's get out of here before the fumes get to us." Each of them got an arm, hauling Snape up before dragging him out.

They had just cleared the entrance to the dungeons when Draco Malfoy dropped on them.

"What did you do?" The blonde-haired boy yelled, wand pointing straight at Shyamal's chest.

"We were rescuing your Head of House, who you selfishly left behind." Shyamal answered his eyes hardening as he stared down at the Slytherin Prefect.

"That is enough!" Professor McGonagall shouted as she strode quickly over to them, Seamus right behind her. Draco quickly hid his wand, fixing his hair as he glared hatefully at Shyamal. Gently as they could, Ron and Shyamal laid Snape out on the ground. "What happened?"

"Two of the cauldrons exploded. One of them caught Professor Snape and threw him against the wall. Before we could do anything, fumes began filling the room. I had everyone clear out. Ron and Shyamal were able to grab Professor Snape after we made sure the room was emptied." Hermione reported.

"Madam Pomfrey is on her way." Seamus added. No sooner than he had said that when the matron turned the corner, levitating a backboard before her.

"Stay here. I will go down and make sure the ventilation shafts are doing their jobs." McGonagall waved her wand around her neck, a transparent bubble encasing her head. She stepped into the dungeon entrance, disappearing into the gloom.

Madam Pomfrey finally reached the, heading quickly to Professor Snape side. "Who moved him?"

"We did." Ron motioned between him and Shyamal.

"Did you not think he may have received injuries that you couldn't see?" The matron huffed, running her wand over Snape's body.

"The room was filling with poisonous fumes. We thought it was better to drag him up here than leave him down there."

"You are lucky then. Professor Snape seems to be only knocked out due to the concussion he has. Nothing a simple potion won't fix." With a flick of her wand, Madam Pomfrey levitated Snape just high enough to slide the backboard under. Another flick and ropes were securing him to it. "He should be up and walking around by dinner time." With that, Madam Pomfrey headed back to her infirmary, Snape moving along before her.

Ah, no he won't. Shyamal thought. He'll be out for the next 12 hours.

Professor McGonagall walked out of the dungeons. "The room shall be cleared once the cauldrons stop giving off their fumes. Your personal bags will be retrieved then. We will have to make sure that this wasn't intentional. Mr. Weasley, Mr. Suha, Ms. Granger, takes 10 points each for your quick thinking. Potions classes are canceled until further notice. Head back to your dormitories until your next class."

Shyamal, Ron, and Hermione waited until the rest of the Gryffindor class was slightly ahead of them before letting go of their breaths.

"I cannot believe that went off without us getting caught." Hermione said, wringing her hands.

"Better than using a firecracker." Shyamal looked pointedly at the two Gryffindors. "Since it's an actual ingredient in today's potion, they'll just overlook it."

"Hey, using the firecracker made perfect sense back then." Ron indignantly said. "We were twelve years old."

"Yeah, if you want to get caught." Shyamal reached into his pocket, withdrawing the Marauder's map. Tapping his wand on the surface, he activated it. Studying the dots, he smiled. "Everything's going just as planned. Madam Pomfrey has Snape in the closest corner to her quarters. All I have to do is sneak in tonight and scan his Dark Mark and we'll be one step closer to setting up the new Map."

"I can't believe we actually did this."

"What's so hard to believe, Hermione? It's not like we did rule-breaking before."

"We actually attacked a teacher, Ron."

"He'll wake up by tomorrow before breakfast. The spell's effects lasts only for 12 hours before dissipating. He's only in a deep sleep." Shyamal tapped the Map again, the lines fading away quickly. "Now we just have to get Professor Black's Auror badge for scanning."

"Having two accidents with two different teachers is pushing it."

"Yeah, I know. Maybe we can have Fred and George distract Black? We can do it on the weekend?"

"Next week is the next Hogsmeade trip." Ron said. "They usually have a list of the teachers heading with the students. We can see if Black is going to be escorting us that day."

"If he is, so much better. All we have to do is sneak in to his office and scan it. Hermione, do you think you can ask McGonagall to assign Black to the Hogsmeade trip next this Saturday? Your excuse is that some of the students are worried the Dark Heir will attack them."

Hermione nodded. "Sure, I'll bring it up in the next meeting." They arrived at Gryffindor Tower. "Gum drops! Now I need to find a way to carry out stuff to the next class. I should probably take a quill, some scrolls, and an inkbottle."

"At least we have an excuse not to bring our books. I wonder if they'll be smelling once we retrieve them."

"Look on the good side, Ron. You'll be able to practice the Scourgify spell if they do." Hermione answered, climbing through the portrait hole.

Slowly, the Gryffindor Common Room emptied, the students heading to bed on ones and two until finally Shyamal, Ron, and Hermione were the only ones left.

"Too bad you don't have an invisibility cloak." Ron muttered, putting his chess pieces away. "I know Potter has one but he keeps it with him."

"Good thing I know the Disillusionment charm. It may not make me invisible but it will make it harder for people to see me and plus, I have the Marauders' Map." Shyamal had taken off his Hogwarts robes earlier, leaving them in the dorms when he had gone up to drop off his textbooks and book bag. He took out his wand and tapped his head with it. "Camuffare!"

Ron and Hermione watched in fascination as ripples flowed down from the point where Shyamal had tapped his head, leaving the teenager transparent. They could still see him, but the outline of his body looked like a trick of the light, the rays bending just enough to give him away if you looked close enough.

"Wicked!" Ron breathed, swaying from side to side. "I can still see you but at other times, you seem to disappear."

"No one knows the advanced form of the Disillusionment charms except for those who make Invisibility cloaks. They don't want people sneaking around you know." Shyamal picked up the Marauders' Map. "Too bad I can't do it to this otherwise I won't be able to see the names."

"It looks like the way is clear." Hermione said, looking over the surface. "You'd better go before you have to take the long way."

Shyamal nodded, folding the Map. "Gum drops!" The portrait swung open and Shyamal climbed through.

"Edward Potter! Where do you think you are going?" The Fat Lady shouted, looking distractedly around, Shyamal keeping to the shadows as he jogged away from Gryffindor Tower.

He climbed down to the sixth floor, pulling out the map again. The stairs were clear. He started down.

The Head Boy and Girl were combing the second floor when Shyamal made his way to the infirmary doors. Madam Pomfrey was hovering near Snape for a few minutes, no doubt doing final checks before she went to bed. The Head couple just barely arrived on the third floor when Shyamal slipped into the infirmary.

It was silent, darker than usual.

Outside of the tall arched windows, the moon was almost gone, just a tiny silver crescent in the dark inky sky.

Shyamal was raised his wand slightly. "Lumos." He whispered, controlling the spell to create a small dim torch beam. Right there, in the bed closest to the infirmary door was Snape. Hanging over the back of the chair next to it was his clean black robes, neatly polished shoes waiting on the seat. Shyamal checked the map and quickly extinguished the light. Crawling he slid under the bed and pulled the edge of the bed sheet down just as whispers were heard outside the infirmary door.

"Andrea, where are you going?" A boy's voice whispered quietly.

"I thought I saw a light here in the infirmary." The door was pushed open, a tall girl entering. "Lumos!" Shyamal laid down carefully on the cold stone floor as the beam of light crossed from one end to the other. "I guess I'm just tired from studying for the NEWTs, Jeff."

"I know how that feels. Come, we should get going. We still have five more levels to sweep through before we head to bed."

"Nox." The door closed, voices fading.

"Shit, that was close." Shyamal released the breath he had been unconsciously holding. He crawled out from under the bed and stood. Snape hadn't even twitched, the spell still working strong. He pulled out a long scroll of parchment, unsure of how many spells were invested into creating a Dark Mark. "Finite Incantatem." The Disillusionment charm disappeared, the transparency fading, Shyamal able to see the beige parchment.

Working swiftly, he drew a few runes on top of the parchment as well as around Snape's arm. "Duplicare Espeleir!" The runes activated, lighting up with a faint glow as even more runes began writing themselves across the parchment.

Minutes ticked on by as line after line was scribbled down. Shyamal gazed down on the parchment, eyes going straight to the magical signature.

He now had a record of Voldemort's own for future reference. Shyamal smiled.

The anchor spell for the Dark Mark was the permanent tattooing spell that created the image of the Mark itself. The other layers were all tied to that main spell. Shyamal's eyes flew over the runes; a messenger spell combined with a light Cruciatus Curse and timing spell; a compulsion charm; a locating charm, the list went on.

Finally after what seemed like a long time, the writing came to an end. Pointing his wand at the runes on Snape's skin Shyamal muttered a cleaning spell, wiping off any remains of his magical signature with an Elven spell. After checking his Deep Sleep spell to make sure it would wear off in the morning, Shyamal rolled up the scroll and stuffed it into his pocket. With a final check around, he picked up the Map and slid out the infirmary door.

Snape stalked around the room. "Have you been practicing, Potter, just like I told you?"

"Yes." Edward replied, looking at Snape's left shoulder.

"Well, we find out just how hard you've been practicing soon enough, won't we?" Snape stopped before Edward. "Wand out, Mr. Potter."

Edward pulled out his holly wand, standing up in front of the desk as Snape raised his wand. "One, two-"

"Professor Snape!" Draco Malfoy burst into the room, grey eyes going straight to the Potions Master. "Sir, Montague is missing and can't be found-" The Slytherin Prefect stopped, eyes going to Edward who had dropped his arm, hiding his wand. The blond-haired boy raised an eyebrow in surprise at seeing Potter standing there.

"Mr. Potter is here for a little Remedial Potions." Snape said smoothly, lowering his wand. Edward's face reddened as Malfoy looked like Christmas had just come a few weeks early.

"Really, Potter, Remedial Potions?" The younger Slytherin sneered. Edward kept himself from groaning. No doubt Malfoy would be telling his other snake friends tonight with some artistic license.

"Why are you here, Draco?" Snape asked, hand curling slightly.

"We were coming back from our rounds and noticed that Montague hasn't been seen since this morning. Madam Umbridge is worried that someone got to him and is asking for your help in finding him."

"How hard is it to find a student?" Snape's dark eyes bored into Malfoy's.

"I don't know sir."

"Potter, we shall resume this lesson tomorrow, same time." Snape motioned Draco to lead, sweeping from the room. The dungeon door closed with a final thump.

Angrily, Edward stuffed his wand into his pocket, reaching out for his book bag.

Stupid Snape. Dad was right; the man's a bloody git. Edward thought savagely.

When he was growing up, Edward had always noticed the tension every time Snape's name come up between his parents. It wasn't hard to find out that in their younger days, Snape had been a very good friend with his mum but for some reason, had drifted apart.

Since Edward had started school, their friendship was slowly recovering. He knew his dad kept his ear to the ground for any sign of mistreatment from Snape who usually kept the insults to a minimum.

This year however, seemed different.

Snape was taking advantage of the tension at the Ministry and pressure from the public to belittle him now. Of course, he didn't want to cause any more stress now that his parents had to worry about what was happening on the war front and with the reappearance of his long lost twin brother. Sirius was also on the edge for much the reasons as his parents. Harry had been Sirius' godson.

Something that was a sore point for Edward as now looking back, Sirius had hung out more with Edward than Harry even though Remus' was Edward's godfather.

Edward was about to stomp out the room when he noticed one of the cabinet doors was slightly ajar, a silvery glow coming from it. He tilted his head, listening intently. Nothing; no doubt the search for Montague would take a while. Edward's fingers twitched.

It wouldn't hurt to take a peek.

He crouched before the cabinet, pulling the door open with his left hand.

There on the floor of the cabinet was a large grey stone basin, runes etched around the edge with a silver-grey color. Inside the basin, a wispy, silver-white gas swirled gently.

Edward had seen this once before, in his father's office back in his third year.

It was a Pensieve.

And it was here in Snape's office.

Grinning madly, Edward bent forward, interested in what memories Snape was keeping from him and plunged his face into the swirling vortex that was Snape's mind. The floor of the office lurched, the Pensieve sucking Edward into its gaseous depths. . . .

He found himself in the middle of the Great Hall, the house tables replaced by dozens of smaller tables. A student sat behind each one, head bent, quills furiously moving across the sheet of parchment before them. In front of them all, swung of the pendulum of the clock tower. It hit Edward; they were taking their end of year exams.

This was Snape's memory so the git had to be around here somewhere. Edward looked carefully, eyes drifting from one tousled head to the next, searching for the familiar greasy black hair of his Potions Master.

And there he was, three rows behind him and two over, hooked nose hovering just above the beige parchment as he scribbled, hair falling around his head. Edward moved behind Snape, taking a glimpse of the exam.

## DEFENSE AGAINST THE DARK ARTS ORDINARY WIZARDING LEVEL

Edward studied the teenager before him. The Potions Master had to be at least fifteen years old, if not sixteen. His skin was pallid as if he had been kept in a cold dungeon away from the sun, devoid of any vibrant color. If Edward thought Hermione was studious, her writing was nothing compared to Snape's. Cramped, tiny, and shaky, Snape had filled out a response that was a foot longer than the students around him, and still adding more.

"One minute left!" Professor Flitwick was easily identifiable on his usual stack of books as he watched from the front of the Hall.

"Quills down, please!" Squeaked the short man. "Quills down! You too, Mr. Wood. Please remain seated! Accio!" Every single roll of parchment shot into the air, zooming straight at the arms of the Charms Professor. The force of all the projectiles knocked him off his feet, a few students laughing. A couple in the front row got up and helped the man to his feet. "Thank you, thank you. You are free to go!"

The mass of students made their way toward the doors, chattering excitedly, grateful for the end of one test. A couple of groans were heard every now and then as a few reviewed questions with other students.

Luckily for Edward, Snape was close enough to the Marauders that Edward glided his way over to hear Sirius question Remus on the test.

"Did you like question ten, Moony?" Sirius asked as the Marauders made their way into the entrance hall.

"You don't even know." Lupin laughed. "Give give five signs that identify the werewolf, providing specific examples."

James narrowed his eyes at Lupin in mock suspicion. "Are you sure that you managed to get at least five signs down?"

Lupin tapped his chin, a thoughtful look crossing his face. "Hmm, I think I did. One: He lives with me. Two: He's sitting in my chair.

Three: Steals clothes from my closet. Four: Sleeps in my bed. Five: Um, uh oh, I think I forgot the last one."

The three taller Marauders laughed except for one.

"I think I got at least three down." Wormtail anxiously said, his hand rising before him as he counted on his fingers. "I got the snout shape, the pupils of the eyes, and the tufted tail but I wasn't sure about the rest. I guessed with size of the wolf and the teeth shape."

James looked at Wormtail. "Come on, Peter! You only run with one once a month at least! You should at least remember that Moon's head comes up even with my antlers."

Lupin knocked an elbow into James' side, glancing around to see if someone overheard them. "Shh, someone might hear you."

"Oh, don't get your knickers in a twist, Moony. Almost everyone is worried about the OWLs." James waved his hand.

Luckily for Edward, all of the students as if on a majority vote were heading down to the lake side. The Marauders sat down underneath the beech tree where Seamus, Dean, Lavender, and Parvati hung out in Edward's year. Edward noted with some slightly disgust that Snape had settled himself behind the very bushes that he had been using a lot this year to avoid the students stares.

I am never using those bushes again. Edward thought. Need to find a new hiding spot.

Edward made his way back to the Marauders thinking they would provide more entertainment.

They did at first.

Remus had taken out a book on Transfiguration and was reading it. Sirius was gazing out around, winking and waving at any girl who just so happen to look at him in the eye. Edward laughed. It reminded him so much of his Sirius now. His dad pulled out something from his pocket, opening his hand.

A Golden Snitch flew from his palm, zigging out just in front of the awed face of Peter before his dad's hand flashed out and caught it.

"Where did you get that?" Lupin asked, his head rising from his book momentarily.

"Nicked it from Hooch's office." James let the Snitch go again, tracking it lazily with an eye. Just as it looked like it was going to fly away, his hand flashed out, fingers curling around the golden shell. Peter laughed in delight.

After a couple of minutes of watching the Marauder, Edward was bored.

At the fifteen minute mark, he was wondering how to get out of the Pensieve or move on to the next memory.

At twenty, he was wondering if he would die of boredom.

A minute later, he was wondering how Peter could be so easily entertained by his dad catching that Snitch.

Edward almost cried in relief when Sirius apparently agreed with him.

"I'm bored." Sirius groaned something that Edward definitely agreed with. "Put that away before Peter decides to wet himself again." The rat Animagus blushed.

Again? Edward thought. It happened once before? I need to ask my dad that. Could use a good laugh.

James straightened slightly, eyes glinting maliciously suddenly. "Your boredom is about to end my friend." He motioned toward the clump of bushes where Snape had sat down behind, Edward tensing at the look of anticipation on his dad's face. "Look who it is. . ."

"Snivellus." Sirius looked like a dog with a scent, figurative tail twitching in barely restrained instinct.

Remus only sighed, head diving even further into his book.

Snape had risen and was now moving across the grass, nose still buried in his book like Remus who sat not a few feet from Edward. Wondering what was going to happen, the Boy Who Lived stood,

head bouncing back and forth between his future Potions teacher and father.

"How was the test, Snivellus?" James asked loudly.

Before Edward could even blink, Snape had reacted, his bag dropping to the floor even as his hand dove into his robes for his wand. His hand was beginning to withdraw when James shouted out in glee. "Expelliarmus!"

Snape's wand went flying, landing more than ten feet away from the fallen boy.

Several students around them stood. Edward thought one of them would surely get up and help Snape.

Seconds ticked by and not one moved to help the teenage Snape except to move closer to the growing spectacle.

Snape dove to his wand, hoping to get there in time.

"Impedimenta!" Sirius barked, the spell catching the diving boy in mid air, sending him flying even more. "The testers probably won't be able to read a word of what he wrote. His big nose was smearing grease marks all over it." Sirius laughed viciously.

"Pathetic- Potter- arrogant." Snape panted, glaring up at James.

Sirius laughed. "Pathetic us, Snivellus? We are not the ones on the ground like a beaten dog."

James grinned at the swear words and hexes streaming from Snape's mouth. "How foul is your tongue, Snivellus? You should wash out your mouth before talking to a lady like that. Scourgify!" Pink and purple soap bubbles foamed from the boy's mouth even as Snape began coughing helplessly. Everyone around the group was laughing, not caring that Snape was being choked, face turning blue. Edward could only watch in detached horror at the transformation of his usually easygoing dad.

Edward looked at Remus who seemed to be ignoring the whole thing.

"LEAVE HIM ALONE!" Edward spun around, mimicking James and Sirius.

His mother, red auburn hair streaming behind her, was stomping from the lake edge, her younger face twisted in an expression Edward had only seen a couple of times in his life and never directed at his father.

It was one of pure loathing.

"Well, hello, Evans." James' voice had changed from the malicious and antagonizing voice to one Edward more identified with his father; caring and affectionate.

"Leave him alone." Lily stood before James and Sirius, her fisted hands on her hips. "What has he ever done to you?"

James looked thoughtfully at the gagging teenager, pretending to mull it over. "Well, it's more of the fact that he exists, you know."

Lily's face reddened even further. "You think you are funny, don't you? But you're nothing, Potter. You're just an arrogant bullying toerag. Leave Severus alone."

"Ah, I'll leave him alone if you go out with me." James looked Lily over, an ugly grin spreading over his face. "Go out with me and I'll never lay a wand on Snivellus again."

None of the teens noticed that Snape was edging toward his wand bit by bit, the Impediment Jinx wearing off.

Lily snorted in disgust. "I wouldn't go out with you if the choice was between you and the giant squid. Not even if the Wizarding world depended on it."

"Ouch, Prongs." Sirius winced, turning around. "Sh-OY!"

Sirius' warning came too late. Snape aimed his wand at James. A bright flash of light and a large gash opened up on James' face, blood spraying out. A second flash and Snape was hanging upside down, robes falling around his head to reveal some ugly underpants that Edward wouldn't be caught dead in.

Edward watched in horror as Snape started flailing around, trying to summon his only line of defense wandlessly.

"Confundo!" The jet of yellow light struck him in the chest, breaking through his hastily erected Shield charm, his focused thoughts suddenly become disjointed and hazy. His arms started spin wildly as he tried to keep his balance on the precarious edge of the platform.

Hmm, maybe he should jump off since the world was spinning wildly. Maybe it was drunk? He would have to talk with Uncle Moony about that, see if Voldemort didn't pour tons of Ogden's Finest down an active volcano. Who knows what that could do to the planet's ecosystem?

"Liberacorpus!" A bright flash of light (did the Sun explode?) and his body jerked up in the air, He was now dangling upside down.

As he struggled to get down or up, that's when Edward heard it.

Laughter.

"Accio wand!"

Working to get his robes out of his face he could see the rest of the students were laughing at him, some pointing their fingers at him, others whispering behind their hands and giggling.

All at him.

"So much for the Golden Boy!" A boy with a silver and green tie yelled out, his sneering face boring into Edward. The crowd laughed even harder.

"Not so big are you now, Potter!"

"That is ENOUGH!" Sirius was yelling now, the laughter disappearing immediately.

"Liberacorpus!" He was suddenly plummeting but before he could hit into the platform, his fall was slowed down until he gently touched down. His face burned in utter humiliation as Shyamal Suha

confronted the Slytherin who had mocked him, his words unintelligible over the roar of blood pumping in his ears.

Unable to look at the other boy, Edward turned his gaze to the wall, sensing Suha jumping off the platform. Arms grabbed at him, helping him up to his feet.

He didn't even pay attention to the confrontation between Sirius and Umbridge.

All he could feel were the humiliation, vulnerability, rage, and depression rolling in his gut.

"Let him go, Potter!" Lily roared, stepping closer to James. Edward snapped out of his own memories, eyes on Snape, the boy utterly helpless against his dad.

"Of course, Evans." James jerked his wand, Snape falling into a crumpled heap on the ground. Before Snape could even do anything else, Sirius yelled out.

"Locomotor Mortis!" Snape's arms and legs snapped to his body, falling over once more.

"LEAVE HIM ALONE!" Lily withdrew her own wand, James and Sirius now carefully regarding her.

"Don't me make me hex you." James cautioned, eye warily watching her wand arm.

"Then take off that stupid curse."

"Fine, fine, since you're the one asking." James muttered the counter-curse. "There you go, Snivellus. You're lucky Evans was here to help you!"

Snape gathered himself up, dark furious eyes on Edward's dad. His wand was still a few feet from where it had fallen the second time. "I don't need help from disgusting mudbloods like her!"

Lily looked at Snape in surprise before composing herself. "Fine. I won't help you in the future. I suggest using a better shampoo in the future, Snivellus."

James glared angrily at Snape. "Apologize to Evans." He raised his wand threateningly.

"I don't want you making him apologize. You're just as bad as he is if not worse." Lily rounded on James.

"What?" his dad yelped. "I'd never call you a – you know."

Lily gave a shrill laugh. "Messing up your hair like if you just came down off a broom, playing with that stupid Snitch you have in your pocket, arrogantly striding down the corridors like a Malfoy, picking on anyone you can, hexing younger students, I'm surprised you can even play Quidditch with a head as big as yours." Lily stepped right in James' face. "You - make – me - SICK!" With that, she turned on her heel and walked away.

"Evans! EVANS!"

His mother didn't even look back once as she walked back down to the water's edge.

"What's wrong with her?" James asked out loud.

Sirius tilted his head, glancing at his best mate. "Reading between the lines, I would have to say that she called you conceited."

Anger began spreading over James' face. "Right, right - back to business then?" Another flash of light and Snape was dangling back in the air. "Who wants me to take off Snivellus' pants here?"

Remus sighed again, snapping his book shut as he got up and walked away, leaving Snape with James, Sirius, Peter, and the crowd watching.

He never found out if his dad actually did take off Snape's pants.

Edward jumped into the air as a hand came down strongly on his shoulder, tightening. He looked up and came face to face with the apoplectic face of the now adult Severus Snape.

"My, my, aren't we having fun today?" Came the deadly quiet hiss of the Potions Master. With a jerk, the memory disappeared into a

white mist, both of them falling through until finally Edward landed on the floor of the dungeon room. Before him, the swirling mists of the memories contained inside the Pensieve stilled.

Snape's hand tightened even further, his fingers digging into Edward's skin despite the layers of clothing. "Enjoying yourself, Potter?"

Edward tried to pull away, desperately trying to free himself. "No. . . ."

Snape's face was still except for his lips which were twitching, stained teeth bared like a caught animal. The sight scared Edward who had never seen this side of his professor before.

"I bet you liked how your father entertained his friends. Amusing man, James Potter." Snape shook Edward hard.

"I – You – Never – " The next second, Edward was flying through the air, landing in a tangled heap on the floor next to the door, book bag digging painfully into his side. He was sure he heard a couple of the ink bottle inside break.

"If you ever whisper a word of what you saw to anyone else, you WILL regret it!" Snape bellowed in rage.

"I won't – Never – " Edward stuttered, trying to get his thoughts together.

"GET OUT! I DON'T WANT TO SEE YOU HERE IN MY OFFICE AGAIN!"

Edward bolted out the door, running through the halls and bursting through the doors of the entrance and out down the steps of Hogwarts. Blindly, he headed for the lake, the gravel of the path crunching under his feet. There was just enough light for him to see by as he ran.

He finally collapsed on the other side, Hogwarts a dark looming shadow, pinpricks of light gleaming from its many windows. Shakily he removed the strap of the book bag from around his neck, rubbing the back of his neck. He looked down at the surface of Black Lake, seeing his darkened reflection in there.

In his mind's eye, he could see the true mirror reflection. Black messy hair, thin face, long nose, same twist of the mouth, hazel eyes that would sparkle with mirth at something funny. . . .

Features inherited from his father, ones that he carried with pride as they were signs that he really was his father's son.

Features that had him wanting to vomit now.

"Well, it's more of the fact that he exists, you know." His dad's voice came back to him, echoing in his mind as Snape hung upside down in the air, the other students laughing uproariously.

He knew how that felt, to be so humiliated right in front of your peers. Along with the feeling of vulnerability that was incomprehensible, unable to attack or even defend yourself. Edward was grateful that Shyamal hadn't taken advantage of the fact that he was helpless during the Dueling Club. A flick of his wand and his pants could have been taken off. Instead, he had simply freed him of the spell, barking at the Slytherin who had jeered at him to come up and duel him. But his dad hadn't been so merciful to the young Severus Snape. No, he made it into a sport, taunting the Potions Master as he yelled out to the gathering crowd.

You're just an arrogant bullying toerag.

James had always joked that Lily had disliked him when they had been in Hogwarts, stating that Lily would threaten him with bodily harm sometimes during their arguments. But from what he had seen, his mum didn't just hate his dad, no, she had totally despised him. The threats in the memory had been real, not the kind between friends but rather, threats between two enemies. Edward couldn't even call them rivals as that term would imply a sense of respect between two competitors; no, this was a duel of pride, life, and reputation on the line.

Snape had always said that he acted like his dad, arrogant, rebellious and spoiled.

If he did, it was no wonder why no one supported him now.

Edward slowly laid out on the ground, curled on his side.

Painfully, he brought memories of the last few years. He had actually harassed Ginny Weasley during his third year, all because of the one comment his dad had made after they had appeared in Professor McGonagall's door, covered in mud, slime, dust, ink, and in Edward's case, blood. His dad had commented on how Edward seemed to be taking after him in the love department, falling for a red-haired beauty just like his mum.

At first, he had taken it as a compliment, but now, seeing Snape's memory, Edward felt nauseated behind comprehension.

At every chance he got, he made sure to rile up Ginny as high as possible, thinking it was the right way for her to fall for him. At first, Ron had thought it was amusing until snippets of the rumors floating around reached his ears. Edward was now ashamed that some of them had started with him opening his mouth to other Gryffindor boys, openly telling them that she was his to do with as he pleased. Ron had confronted him on it but Edward had brushed him off, commenting that he should be glad that the Boy Who Lived had caught sight of his sister. In response, Ron had punched right on the jaw, breaking it.

That was the end of their friendship, Hermione turning from him as well.

Of course, when his parents had asked him why Ron and Hermione had stopped being friends with him, he had placed the blame at their feet, stating they had gotten jealous of his fame. Like any parent, James and Lily had sided with him.

How many times did he cover up his mistakes and blunders with lies?

"Well, it's more of the fact that he exists, you know."

His dad hadn't changed. The fact that he exists. Ever since Edward had told them, specifically his dad, that it was Harry who had lured them out there that tragic August night, his dad had pretended that Harry didn't exist, that Edward was the only surviving child of four children, not five. Harry's room hadn't been left untouched for more than two hours when James Potter, trembling in fury and completely

tore the room apart, cleaning out with a hatred Edward would never had believed was possible.

The burden Edward had created for himself crushed him even further, stifling him.

It was too late wasn't it?

Daniel, Jonathon, and Evie were all dead and Harry was a Death Eater, no doubt feeling his brother's betrayal of him along that of the Light's.

He had pushed his brother away, breaking him until nothing was left.

He was the reason why Harry fell into the darkness allowing that monster to burn his skin that ugly branding.

Edward was the reason why Harry choose to go with the Death Eaters.

What other choice did he have when his father was hunting for him after Edward had told him it was all Harry's fault, Harry's decision to go out of the wards that night?

The feeling of loneliness was squeezing his heart.

He shivered in the cold night air, body numb.

Kingsly Shacklebolt watched as the Hogwarts carriages came into Hogsmeade, pulling up and dropping of the early students near the Three Broomsticks. A few couples broke away from the rest of their peers, no doubt wanting to have some alone time with their significant other. One pair was taking the route to Madam Puddifoots'.

Kingsley shuddered.

Awful place that was, too romantic to the extreme.

A few of the students were going to Zonko's joke shop, no doubt going to give Argus Filch later on. The Auror noted that two of them bore the red hair of the Weasleys.

A carriage pulled up, another group of what looked like third years getting off, Sirius Black right behind them. Underneath the robes of a Hogwarts professor, Kingsley could see the Auror belt strapped around Sirius' hips, including the extra wand and St. Mungo's Emergency Portkeys. The belt was Auror's second best friend, right behind the man covering the Auror's back; two knives with magical recalling spells, some Muggle pepper spray, basic potions for basic healing , all contained in unbreakable vials, a writing kit, a small bag of Peruvian Darkness Powder, and more.

A couple of schools girls to the left of him giggled, pointing at a boy down the street.

The Auror looked across the street, catching a glimpse of Dawlish lounging outside of Scrivenshaft's.

James had assigned a group of fifteen Aurors to cover the Hogsmeade trip. He wasn't taking any chances of Harry Potter coming after Edward or the students. About half of the Auror today were pulling double pay on making sure nothing threatened the young witches and wizards spreading out over Hogsmeade.

Professor McGonagall stepped out of a carriage, her bun neatly coiled on top of her head. She nodded to him as she went into the Three Broomsticks.

The last carriage pulled up, a sullen looking Edward appearing, head bowed.

Poor boy. Kingsley thought. No doubt Sirius gave him a talk along with Lily. Has to be hard being on your brother's death list.

Kingsley stepped off the wooden walkway that lined the main street, moving behind a group of sixth years, eyes moving from one place to the next, taking in every detail. Dawlish had moved to Zonko's. Down the street, Frank Longbottom was chatting easily with a couple of Hogsmeade residents, no doubt checking to see if anyone noticed something suspicious over the last few days.

Kingsley shook his head, remembering the news a few days of the event of October 31, 1981. James had still been on the edge after the attack on his family and rapid appearance of Daniel and Jonathon Potter. He was so twitchy about sudden drastic changes in

routine that when Frank and Alice hadn't shown up for tea that night that James had called Sirius and Remus together to go to the Longbottom's home.

It was lucky he did.

Barty Crouch Junior, Rodolphus and Rabastan Lestrange had caught the pair alone. Both had been wrapped up with searing hot magical ropes and were cruelly being tortured with the Cruciatius Curse. A duel had ensued with the four Death Eaters now the ones trussed up like a turkey. Frank had gotten out with less permanent damage, suffering sporadic twitching of the nerves until his brain finally fully recovered a year later. Alice on the other hand wasn't so lucky; she now suffered from epileptic seizures that forced her to take a specific potion therapy once every day.

The most devastating blow was the fact the healers at St. Mungo's had told her she would not be able to carry another baby to full term with some serious risk to both her and the fetus.

Alice adhered to a second strict routine that suppressed her ovulation.

Kingsley snapped out of his musing when he felt the metal plate on his leather wrist band vibrate for a brief second. Realizing what it meant, he held his forearm before him, pulling the sleeve back just far enough to read the words.

ATTACK- DIAGON ALLEY  
est 30 Death Eaters  
Need reinforcements  
DARK HEIR SIGHTED  
USE EXTREME CAUTION

Kingsley cursed. Already Sirius was calling out for students to head back to Hogwarts. The professors were rushing out of the Three Broomsticks when Kingsley turned on his heel and Disapparated. . . .

To appear on the edge of a full out battle.

The wall next to Kingsley face exploded outward as a Bombarde spell landed on it, bits of the brick stinging Kingsley's cheek.

Already he could see a couple of bodies lying on the ground, an Auror in a puddle of blood further down near the line of Death Eaters.

Sitting at a table outside of the Ice Cream Parlour was the Dark Heir himself, finishing a dish that had been left there by a customer. James was near Gringott's trying to cover a fallen Auror who was trying to keep his guts from spilling out onto the street.

Kingsley touched the buckle on his belt activating the calling charm that was linked to a wrist band similar to the one Kingsley was wearing; the band that was worn by the Elven warrior King Shahriar recruited to help them. After checking sure the call had been received, Kingsley through a Stone Shield Charm, darting his way to where James was standing, pulling out one of his medical portkeys out.

## Chapter Twenty Two- Anthanasius

Cosmas and Damian carefully made their way toward the DADA classroom, the halls practically empty of students and staff. They had purposely been lazy the whole week, letting their homework pile up so they could have an excuse to stay at Hogwarts for the Hogsmeade trip. Shyamal had caused a scene last night when he had asked them about their homework, adding more cover to their plan.

Hermione and Ron has been successful in asking McGonagall to assign Professor Black to supervise the Hogsmeade trip, helping to provide a more peaceful mind to the students who were worrying about an attack on their school trip. The trip would take most of the day, giving the Suha twins ample time in entering Professor Black's office, search for and scan the Auror badge.

"Hogwarts, is there anyone inside?" Damian asked quietly, facing the stone wall slightly. To him, it felt weird talking to open air.

"The classroom and the office are empty. The surrounding halls are void of people as well." The disembodied voice of the school drifted to them.

Damian reached out, turning the door knob and opening it. The door creaked but Damian opened it enough for him to slip in. Cosmas followed, closing the door. The two made their way through the desks to the staircase where they paused.

"He is an Auror." Cosmas said, leaning forward slightly, eyeing the simple stone steps. "And he's friend with Mad Eye."

"Constant vigilance." Damian agreed. "Are there any spells on the stairs and the office door?"

"There are no spells except for the spell on a trunk hidden in Professor Black's closest in his personal quarters." Black's quarters were with the rest of the professors and staff on the fourth floor, except for Professor Dumbledore and Professor Snape.

"Let's hope the badge isn't in the office then." Cosmas muttered as he led them up the stairs. "I don't plan on entering Professor Black's room."

The office was simple, a large red cherry desk with gilded edges across the room, two plushy chairs in front. On one side was two book shelves filled with books on DADA and subscriptions to professional Auror magazines. Opposite was a large calendar with multicolored boxes all over it.

"Lupin's doing, I bet." Damian said as he started searching the left side of the desk. "You check the other side. Shyamal told me it was in here somewhere." Damian opened the first drawer, dismayed to see that it had an enlargement charm on it. "Bloody hell." Cosmas echoed it when he opened the first drawer on his side.

"This is the seventh year." Cosmas noted, flicking through the folders. "Ugh, it's going to take us forever."

"Check the ones without the school papers. I can't see him putting his badge with school papers." Damian closed the first drawer which contained the folders for the first and second year classes. The second drawer held the third and fourth folders while the third drawer held the fifth and the sixth. Damian opened the final drawer and began shifting around carefully, trying to not mess with the clutter too much. Cosmas went to the second drawer which held what looked like letters.

Dear Padfoot,

Everything is crazy here at the office. Kingsley is a good Deputy Head but I miss your presence here at the office. . . .

"What is that?" Damian noticed his brother wasn't looking. "Come on, we have to find that badge."

"I found one of Dad's letters addressed to Black." Cosmas tilted the letter so Damian could see the familiar scrawl of their father's handwriting. "He's talking about what's happening at the Auror office. Not much info as the letters are being monitored by Umbridge."

"Put it away. We have to find the badge first. Once we find it, then we can read whatever he wrote. Shyamal might be interested in what's going on between those two."

"There's a reason why you're my twin brother." Cosmas grinned before turning back to the drawers. "Merlin, he has a lot of junk in here." The second drawer only held letters so Cosmas moved onto the next one. "More junk. Damn, Black's a hoarder."

"It could be worse. He might have taken after Moony or even Moody and then we would have been in trouble."

"STUDENTS, PLEASE RETURN TO HOGWARTS AT ONCE. ALL HOGWART STUDENTS, PLEASE RETURN TO THE CASTLE GROUNDS IMMEDIATELY!"

Shyamal cursed under his breath, wondering of Cosmas and Damian had broken into Professor Black's office and scanned his Auror badge yet. Quietly, he followed the throng of students back to the point where the carriages were arriving, each one being filled to the brink quickly, ignoring the protests of some groups as they were split up into different carriages. The staff that had been assigned to the trip formed a protective circle around the main throng of students, wands out and ready.

He scanned the crowd, searching for Ron and Hermione but seeing no sign of them. He knew that the two carried a slight fancy toward each and often disappeared to be by themselves. He searched for a sign of his sister. He didn't see her.

"12 students to each carriage! No whining." Professor Black yelled, out. He flicked his wand at the next twelve, blue rings of fire around their arms. "Come on, quickly!" The 12 students piled into the carriage that just pulled up.

There only had to be a reason why they were being herded back.

There was an attack somewhere.

The group of Aurors positioned around the village had shrunk as three-quarters had Apparated away with loud-sounding cracks. The ones left behind were patrolling the village now, wands in hand, eyes studying each person that scuttled across the street near the Hogwarts students.

A ring of purple fire curled around his arm, pulling him toward the carriage coming to a halt next to Black.

"Come on, come on, move!" Shyamal grabbed the sides of the door and pulled himself up, taking a seat next to a scared small Hufflepuff, Zacharias Smith taking the seat on the other side of Shyamal.

"I wonder what's happening." Shyamal recognized the Ravenclaw as Padma Patil, Parvati's twin sister. "There has to be something going on to freak out the Aurors and the professors." The carriage squeaked ominously, starting up the path to Hogwarts at a fast clip.

"There's an attack somewhere. The Aurors and teachers are possibly worried there will be a Death Eater group showing here." Shyamal answered quietly. He leaned back against the seat as he felt the leather bracelet around his wrist warm up, signaling that the Auror who had the twin bracelet had activated the Protean Charm on them. He needed to find a secluded area as soon as possible to head to the attack.

A boy with a navy blue and grey tie who Shyamal didn't recognize nodded grimly. "No doubt the Head Auror believes the Dark Heir will come after his only son."

"The Dark Heir is his son too, Kevin." Padma argued.

"Pfft." Zacharias scoffed. "You heard what Auror Potter said. The Dark Heir is no son of his; he's been disowned ever since they found out that it was his fault his younger siblings died. I would do the same thing if my child joined You-Know-Who."

Padma stared out the window. "I don't know. Why would he do something like that? I mean, why not just take a knife and stab the Boy Who Lived in the back? There were so many things he could have done and gotten away with. Yet, he allows himself to be identified as a Death Eater? Plus, no one has seen the face underneath the mask. It's only speculation on a witness' statement that it was him. It could be anyone under that mask. I mean, how much effort does it take to change one's hair color and eye color? The facts don't add up or are too vague."

Zacharias laughed darkly. "That's what's wrong with you Ravenclaws. Everything has to be logical. When you're a psychotic killer, normal logic doesn't apply. Maybe he gets his kicks out of seeing the pain his parents are going through and likes how they are

trying to protect his arrogant Gryffindor brother from his evil twin brother."

"What do you think, Shyamal?" Kevin asked.

"Padma has a good point. The Dark Heir could have done much more damage if he had kept himself undercover. Either way, it does not matter who the Dark Heir is, he has to be taken down." Shyamal said quietly.

"Who do you think will do it; you?" Shyamal's eyes went to the boy who had spoke, catching sight of the silver and green tie. "Just because you fought Potter in a duel and won, you think you're a brilliant duelist?" The boy sneered. The three students closest to the Slytherin boy inched away from him, sensing the rise in tension in the carriage.

"I would shut up, Nott. You're the only Slytherin here. Don't want to take the chances that something might happen to you between now and when this carriage reaches the gate." Kevin answered.

"Oh, acting like a Gryffindor, are we? I thought Ravenclaws were supposed to be smart."

"Thanks for giving me an excuse, Nott." Shyamal pulled out his wand, making sure Nott's eyes fell down on the slender wood. He tapped the tip against his knee, studying the Slytherin boy. "I'm sure everyone here will pretend nothing happened. Just that you leaned too much against the door causing it to suddenly spring up. I hear that bone doesn't hold up well against a hoof coming down at 200 pounds or the weight of a fully loaded carriage."

Nott paled. He turned away, scowling out at the scenery. Shyamal slipped his wand back into his holster, leaning back against the seat, arms crossed on his chest.

The rest of the journey passed in a tense silence.

With a creak of its springs, the carriage came to a stop at the steps of the Entrance Hall. The twelve students piled out, joining the students already waiting at the oak doors. Argus Filch and Professor Snape were there, identifying each student as they passed through. The moment they entered the Entrance Hall, the students broke

apart, heading toward their respective dormitories. Thanks to the Marauder's Map, Shyamal had remembered the secret passageways near the Entrance Hall and when the chance came, he slipped into one, the secret door sliding shut behind him. He pulled out his wand. "Lumos!" In the light of the spell, he pulled back his sleeve, checking the message.

ATTACK- DIAGON ALLEY  
est 30 Death Eaters  
Need reinforcements  
DARK HEIR SIGHTED  
USE EXTREME CAUTION

Shit. Shyamal cursed. The school would be filled with students again and patrolling staff, increasing the risk that someone would see Cosmas and Damian coming out of Professor Black's office. "Hogwarts, can you keep a watch on my brothers to make sure no one catches them?"

"Of course, Shyamal; I'm already monitoring the students heading their way."

"Is my sister here or is she still at Hogsmeade?"

"Your sister followed you to the carriages but she never got on one, choosing instead to come back at the castle. She has been haunting the third floor since then." Shyamal's head rose at this, a small frown appearing on his face. Third floor? Why would Hala haunt the third floor? Shyamal shook his head, putting the thoughts away for later, knowing he couldn't focus on that at the moment. "Will you be heading to the attack site, Shyamal?"

"Yes." Shyamal touched his necklace, whispering the password that activated the necklace. With a shimmer, his Hogwarts robes disappeared as the Elven armor appeared. Eclipsis. With a whisper of his mind, Shyamal called his phoenix to him. In a burst of white and black flames, the white phoenix appeared, winging his way to Shyamal's shoulder. "It's time; to Diagon Alley." Shyamal sent a mental image of where he wanted to appear.

The magic around them began to build up, spreading from the edges of the black leather boots to the very top of his head, the gentle warmth increasing until finally the magic ignited, white and

black flames engulfing him. In a fraction of a second, the two were gone.

Kingsley grunted, snapping the port-key to the fallen Auror's belt. "Mudbloods rule." The password activated, the medical port-key turning a bright blue before the Auror disappeared.

"Protego!" James yelled the shield snapping in front of them as a Death Eater let loose a volley of Exploding Hexes. Kingsley stood, moving until he was side by side with James.

"I wonder why they are attacking here." Kingsley grunted as a powerful Entrails Expelling Hex struck his own shield, the purple dome shattering. "Why not attack Hogsmeade where the students are visiting?"

"Perhaps, he wants to prove a point. Bombarde!" The hex scattered an approaching group of Death Eaters, forcing them to take cover. "I'm glad they chose this place."

Kingsley spun around, wand pointing directly in the face of an approaching Death Eater. "Everte Statum!" The spell picked up the wizard, throwing him into the window of Kayla's Wizarding Appliances. "Incarcerous!" Ropes shot out of Kingsley's wand, wrapping tightly around the wizard's wrists and ankles. He quickly cast temporary Anti-Port-key, Anti-Animagus, and Anti-Apparating wards.

"Avada Kedavra!" James ducked as the Killing Curse missed him by inches, striking the wall behind him. The Head Auror repositioned himself, sending back a barrage of spells to pin down the Death Eater who had tried to kill him. Kingsley moved around and with a Cutting Hex, distracted the wizard long enough for James to break through and stun him.

More cracks sounded through the air as another group of Death Eaters appeared. An explosion rocked the telescope shop, small metal pieces clattering around Diagon Alley. Fire began licking the water vanes running along the edge of the ceiling, an unnaturally dark red color; a sign of water-resistant fire.

"We need more back up." James growled as they gave up ground to the reforming Death Eater line marching toward them. Their shields

snapped in time to block every spell the Aurors threw at them in an attempt to stop them.

"We have everyone here. The Hit Wizards are on the other side of Diagon Alley to keep the Death Eaters from heading toward the Leaky Cauldron and into the street beyond." Kingsley grunted as a Cutting Hex broke through his shield and struck him in the upper arm. Blood began running down his arm, dripping to the cobblestones. Kingsley switched his wand to his other hand, continuing to throw hexes and jinxes.

The approaching Death Eater to James' left fell as three Stunners sped across the battleground, the first breaking his hastily erected shield. The two Aurors turned enough to catch a glimpse of the new comer. "Sorry for the delay, gentlemen, I had some trouble."

Ducking and dodging was an individual dressed in foreign battle clothes, a silver helmet hiding his face, his red cape flowing around him. His wand was out, casting a continuous barrage of spells toward the Death Eaters.

"Who are you?" James demanded, ducking a Cruciatus Curse.

The newcomer bowed to James before back flipping away from an Exploding Hex. "I am Anthanasius. I come from Romania to help you."

When Shyamal arrived, he could immediately tell that the Death Eaters were slowly gaining the upper ground, forcing the few Aurors back. Eclipsis trilled as he flew up and into the fray, heading straight toward the closest injured person.

From where he was standing, he saw the Death Eaters were spreading from the entrance to Knockturn Alley, a well known Dark wizard sympathizers. The Dark Heir himself was standing casually near the Ice Cream Parlour, watching the fight calmly. None of the surrounding Aurors were able to take a shot at the assumed leader as the Death Eaters kept them occupied. James Potter and his Deputy Head were slowly being forced back from where they were near the entrance to Gringotts. A female Auror on the other side, cried out as an electric blue spell caught her on the leg. Painfully, she activated her medical port-key, barely escaping in time as a Killing Curse struck where she had been.

A Death Eater was slipping his way toward Potter even as a stray hex caught the tall dark skinned man on his right arm.

With a flick of his wrist, Shyamal's wand shot into his hand even as he began to cast. The red jets flew over the street, striking the Death Eater in the chest and knocking him out.

"Sorry for the delay, gentlemen, I had some trouble." Shyamal said as he entered the battle. He twirled his wand, casting a barrage of Exploding Hexes, Dart Spells, and Slime Jinxes.

"Who are you?" Potter asked.

Shyamal bowed to the Head Auror, knowing he couldn't keep an antagonistic attitude toward him without due cause. The hairs on the back of his head stood up; Shyamal quickly forced himself into a back flip from the awkward position. As he landed, he answered Potter's question. "I am Anthanasius. I come from Romania to help you."

The Death Eaters rushed them, ending the conversation. Two came straight at Shyamal.

He pointed at the ground before the first Death Eater. "Glacialis solum!" He dodged out of the way of an incoming spell, watching as ice began to form over the ground. The Death Eater was too busy trying to hit Shyamal that he didn't notice the change in the environment until his foot stepped onto an ice covered stone. The Death Eater yelled out trying to regain his balance on the icy floor. His partner looked at him confusingly, momentarily distracted.

"Expulso!" The ground underneath the stumbling Death Eater and one of his legs exploded, sending him and his partner against an unforgiving wall. "Incarcerous!" Magical ropes began twisting themselves over the wizards' ankles and wrists. He flicked the first Death Eater into the store, setting him down hidden behind the store window. The second Death Eater followed, Shyamal propping him next to the other secured Death Eater.

Shyamal was about to cast an Anti-Apparition Jinx and Anti-Portkey Jinx when his instinct kicked in again. He rolled out of the way, a

Killing Curse missing him and striking one of the bound Death Eaters.

"Fuck!" Shyamal turned around, dodging another spell as three more Death Eaters fell down on him.

"Who do we have here?" The lead Death Eater asked, her dark eyes slightly unhinged. "Do we have a little elf boy here who think he can play with the adults?"

"Ah, is the poor skinny bitch before me missing the body of her husband? I wonder if she's wanking off with her Master since she can't shag her man." Shyamal taunted back, knowing immediately who the voice belonged to.

"Why you little piece of shit! Avada Kedavra!" The woman yelled.

Shyamal wordlessly called out his next spell, moving away as he did so. Murus Marmoreus! A slab of marble appeared, absorbing the sickly green jet of light before shattering into little pieces and dust.

"What the – The Killing Curse can't be stopped! It's not possible!" Bellatrix Lestrange screamed, grabbing her mask and tearing it off.

"And you call yourself knowledgeable in the art of dueling." Shyamal laughed at the confusion he could hear in the incantations being sent his way. He retaliated, conjuring more marble slabs to block the Unforgivables as he shot back with spells of his own. Shyamal increased the distance between him and the others, giving him more time to react to the barrage of spells coming at him. As he ran past another dueling pair, he slid out dagger from his belt and flicked it at the Death Eater, catching him in the side. The Auror took advantage and sent a stunner, knocking him out. Shyamal continued on, Bellatrix and her goons not letting up.

Even then, three against wasn't fair. He had to quickly even the odds. "Silicis Vallum!" A giant earthen wall appeared, rising from the floor and hiding Shyamal from his three opponents. "Gemino Illusio!" A second later, the wall collapsed, revealing seven Elven warriors in battle armor.

"Kill them all!" The female Death Eater yelled. The seven warriors broke from each other, all of them independently moving from the

others. As one cast a stunner, a second threw a Slime hex and a third cast an Exploding Hex. Bellatrix focused herself on trying to find the real one, studying each one carefully as she began throwing Killing Curses in an attempt to wipe out the seven warriors.

Shyamal laughed silently as he carefully made his way around them until he was behind the three Death Eaters. "Expluso! Acerturbo! Expulsum Viscus!" The first Death Eater screamed in pain as his lower back exploded outward, blood seeping from the wound as he fell to the ground. Lestrange howled in fury as an invisible wind picked her up and began twirling her around and around. To all who could see, it was like she had been caught in a small tornado. She slammed into the window of Flourish and Blotts, her wand clattering just outside. The final Death Eater was struggling to get out of the hardening slime that was now encasing his lower legs. "Accio Wands!" Three wands flew into Shyamal's hand. He slid them into a pouch on his belt, making sure to add an Anti-Summoning Charm. "Expulsum Viscus!" More slime covered the final Death Eater, spraying from Shyamal's wand and onto the wizard's chest and arms.

"Little brat! Get me out of here before I get you!"

Shyamal didn't say a word as he stunned the slime-covered Death Eater. He was about to head toward where Potter was dueling five Death Eaters when something struck his right thigh. Shyamal hissed through his teeth as he spun around to face what had attacked him -

- Only to stare into the furious green eyes of the Dark Heir.

"Damian, the students have begun returning to the school. Reports have alerted the staff to a Death Eater attack in Diagon Alley. Normal procedures are being followed."

"Out of all the bloody days, they chose to pick this one." Cosmas cursed, slamming the drawer shut. "Is Black on his way here?"

"Yes as he is a staff member of Hogwarts."

"We haven't found the badge yet." Damian stood up, trying to think where the badge would be Shyamal had told him it would be in the desk as that's where the badge had been seen last. Was it possible Black had left it somewhere else? "Where would it be?" He let his

eyes roam around the room, trying to see what would be out of the ordinary. "Accio Black's Auror badge!" In the silence of the office, the twins heard something rattle just loud enough for them to hear. "Did you hear that, Cosmas?"

"Yeah, it has to be here. Do the spell again after I change." Cosmas' body began changing, his clothes fading way until a large werewolf was standing there. Damian uttered the spell again. Cosmas' ears pricked forward, head tilting slightly. Damian cast the spell a third time and Cosmas bounded toward the book shelf, nose nudging a shelf with DADA books. Cosmas shifted back, hand reaching out to pluck a small, hardcover book. He opened it, revealing the badge in a compartment cut out from the pages in the book.

"If Hermione saw that, she would have died."

"Screw Hermione, imagine Madam Pince?" Cosmas grinned, pulling the silver badge out and casting the necessary charms on it. Damian pulled out the parchment Shyamal had given to him, linking the badge to the parchment. A spell later, the runes were writing themselves across the beige surface.

"You will pay for what you just did, Elf!" The Dark Heir hissed. He pulled his arm back and lashed out, the tails of a flaming whip arcing toward Shyamal who dodged again, casting more spells.

"Expulsum Viscus!" The slime shot toward the Heir, but before it could even land, it turned to sand, blowing away on the slight breeze. Silver darts formed in the air before the Dark Heir, zooming toward Shyamal who Disapparated and appeared a couple of feet away from the Dark Heir, sword drawn and swinging down. It was about to connect when something slammed into him, hissing and thrashing. Distracted, Shyamal grunted in pain as a spell connected with his stomach, throwing him clear across the Alley into the door to Madam Malkin's, sword falling away.

Shyamal grabbed the thing that coiling around him and pulled. Reptilian eyes bored into Shyamal's, yellow and glaring with a hate only seen in humans. Feathered wings beat across his helmet, the clawed feet trying to get through the mithril armor on his stomach.

Eclipsis! Shyamal yelled out. A flash of white and black flames appeared, the thing on Shyamal crying out in pain as his phoenix joined the fray.

"Get away, you stupid bird, I said get away!" The Dark Heir screamed. Eclipsis ignored the Dark Heir, wrapping his talons around the clawing hind legs as he snapped at the lunging head of the creature. "Vritra, kill the bird!" The thing launched into the air, hissing and biting at Eclipsis. Shyamal got up, finally recognizing the thing for what it was.

It was an Occamy, a winged serpent with hind legs. The long serpentine body was the color of the Killing Curse, a web of dark green lines running down. Dark grey wings, sprouted from near the neck, the feathers lined with black. The two legs that stretched from the lower half of the serpent were shaped like those creatures found in Muggle museums, the first digit higher up and curved into a sickle-shaped claw. The Occamy opened its mouth as it hissed, revealing the one inch fangs.

Eclipsis let out an angered shrill, twisting and clawing at the Occamy.

Shyamal saw the Dark Heir aim his wand, murder in his eyes.

Watch out!

"Avada Kedavra!" The green spell flew toward Eclipsis, the Occamy disengaging from the fight. Flames erupted around his familiar, the bird appearing right next to Shyamal. Silence dropped down, blanketing them as the din of the other battles continued to erupt around them

"You have a phoenix. Only one person has a phoenix and he is very well known." The Heir's eyes fell on Shyamal. "Who are you?"

"I am Anthanasius." His fingers tightened.

The Dark Heir tilted his head. "Why don't you join us, Anthanasius? My Lord has the same dreams as you. Join and he will grant you immortality."

"Everyone dies. It is a fact of life. Your Master will die." Shyamal answered calmly. His sword was six feet away, the hilt facing away

from him. His wand was tucked safely in his arm holster but a single movement and the Dark Heir would react.

"My Master is more powerful than you can imagine, Elf. Once he conquers this country, he will slowly make his way to your homeland. Your brethren will fall and burn in everlasting fire as he watches." The Dark Heir moved.

"We'll see." In a blink of an eye, Shyamal summoned his sword, the hilt falling right into his hand as he moved out of the way of the Killing curse the Dark Heir threw at him. Eclipsis and the Occamy re-engaged back over their heads, clawing, biting, snapping, lunging, and twisting in the air. He sheathed his sword and slid his wand back into his hand.

Shyamal submerged himself in the instincts born of intense physical training under Miroslav's watchful eye. He ducked, rolled, dodged, spun, flipped, and Apparated out of the path of the spells the Dark Heir was sending his way. There were times where Shyamal had to step into the path of a less dangerous spell, risking the chance of injury as he avoided the Unforgivables and the unknown spells he could not identify by sight.

Shyamal back flipped away and Disapparated in mid-flip as the Occamy broke free from Eclipsis long enough to chase him as the Dark Heir sent a barrage of Killing Curses in his wake. He appeared ten feet from Voldemort's apprentice, quickly sending a mixture of curses back.

Eclipsis gave a shriek as he dived at the Occamy who was near the ground, talons out. The Occamy hissed, writhing as the silver tips dig into its back, black blood squirting out. It snapped back, catching Eclipsis in the underbelly. Shyamal twisted around, feeling his familiar's pain. His gloved hand grabbed the dagger from his right boot and flicked it at the Occamy. The Dark Heir jerked back to cast a spell but the blade was already sinking into the tail of the Occamy.

Shyamal grunted out in pain as a Bludgeoning Hex caught him in the back, sending him crashing into an abandoned stall. Pain throbbed from his lower back as he rolled away, climbing to his feet. The Dark Heir stalked him, wand held out.

"Glaciartus!" The electric blue jet flew out from the Dark Heir's wand, barely missing Shyamal's hand as he threw himself away. Shyamal hissed in pain as the injury protested the movement.

"Fervidus Phoinix!" A red flaming phoenix erupted from Shyamal's wand, winging its way toward the Dark Heir. The wizard bellowed angrily as the edge of his robe caught on fire. As he conjured water to put out the fire, Shyamal threw himself at the Dark Heir.

The two of them tumbled to the ground, Shyamal's holly wand clatter into the street gutter. Shyamal drew his non-wand arm back and sending it into the Dark Heir's jaw. The head flew back, mask slipping. Shyamal quickly grabbed at it, trying to rip it off but a hand wrapped itself around his wrist, gripping painfully. The Dark Heir grunted as he tried to twist his arm around. Shyamal's hand shot out and wrapped around the Dark Heir's hand, trying to keep the wand from every point of his body.

Luckily for Shyamal, casting a Killing Curse at such a close range would be suicidal for both of them. Shyamal twisted his body, flipping himself on top, knee pinning the Dark Heir to the cobblestones. His muscles were straining as the two fought for control.

"Release me, Elf, and you will die a fast death." The Dark Heir hissed at him, green eyes flashing with pure hatred.

Shyamal didn't say anything as he twisted the Dark Heir's wrist until with a loud sounding crack, Shyamal broke the Dark Heir's wrist. In the distraction, Shyamal's hand was free. Just as he was about to cast a wandless Stunning spell, he was thrown forward as the Occamy crashed into his back, forcing him off the Dark Heir. The wizard climbed to his feet, cradling his broken wrist to his chest.

"Retreat! Vritra!" The Occamy lashed out with its tail, catching Eclipsis in the head before flying back and coiling around the Dark Heir like a gruesome scarf before the two disappeared with a sharp crack.

"It's done." Damian checked the parchment, looking for the runes signifying the end of the scanning. He found it and released the scroll, watching it roll up by itself. "Come on. Let's get out of here before Black comes." The two brothers quickly fixed the room,

covering up their magic signatures, straightening out little things, checking the drawers, and wiping off fingerprints before leaving.

"I can't believe Black didn't put up wards." Cosmas whispered as they stomped down the stairs and ran between the desks. "Hogwarts, is it clear?"

"Yes, no staff for the next couple of halls."

"Good. We can get into the secret passage behind the Statue for Ferdinand the Loyal." The two of them slipped out.

Shyamal picked himself up, gingerly laying a hand on his throbbing back. No doubt, if he hadn't been wearing the dragon leather, the spell could have possibly killed him from internal injuries. At the best, he was looking at a painful and deep muscle bruise. He checked his weapons, making sure his wand was safely tucked into its holster.

"I cannot believe you fought him!" Shyamal turned around to see the young man he had helped gawking him at him. The man was holding out his knife, hilt first.

"What do you mean?" Shyamal grabbed the dagger and quickly stuffed it into his boot, scanning it for any tracking spells. He found none so he rose to his feet again.

"The Dark Heir, of course! Every Auror or wizard that has gone up against him has died. You're the first to have survived a personal fight with him."

Shyamal gave a grunt as he walked to where he had dumped Bellatrix Lestrange, cursing loudly when he didn't see her among the wreckage of the shop.

"One of the Death Eater went to her before they retreated, no doubt taking her with him. Wilson, go and check to see the status of the Hit Wizards." James Potter stated as he came up on him and the Auror who nodded before jogging off. "We were able to hold onto the Death Eater you caught before Lestrange showed up. The one in slime has also been retrieved. However, the one with the back injury is dead."

Shyamal's back tightened. "How are your Aurors?"

"We have three dead, two in critical condition, and quite a few supporting non-fatal wounds." James looked him over. "How did you know about the attack?"

"That would be me." Kingsley said as he approached them. "Dumbledore." He muttered toward James. The Head Auror slowly nodded, knowing he would have to ask the Headmaster when he could. "That was unconventional fighting, tackling the Dark Heir like that."

"You do what you can to survive." Eclipsis flew down on Shyamal's shoulder, trilling softly to the two Aurors. "It's time for me to leave. You know how to reach me."

Kingsley nodded. Shyamal took a step back, flames rising up around him. A second later, the two Aurors were the only ones standing there.

James turned to his friend and comrade. "You and I will have to talk about this soon." The dark-skinned Auror heard the order hidden in that sentence.

"After all the paperwork has been filed."

James looked at the spot where the Elf had disappeared. "Did you know that he had a phoenix with him?"

"Dumbledore didn't tell me much about this Elf. Just to call him using the device he gave me and that he was a friend." Kingsley said.

James massaged his temple, frowning at the floor. "We're going to have to find a way to explain how he came here otherwise Fudge will be on my arse about this."

"Dumbledore came up with an explanation." Stepping closer, Kingsley quickly gave him a run-through of the cover-up Dumbledore had told them to tell Fudge and the reporters. "As long as he keeps quiet about how he knows about the attacks, it should hold up."

"It should." James took one last look around the damaged street, noting the heavily damaged stores, one still burning in the inside. "I'm heading back to the office. No doubt Fudge will want a quick update on what's happening."

"Can't say I envy you, James." Kingsley knew that Fudge would take the opportunity to snap at his friend. Ever since last June, Fudge had taken to ridicule his Head Auror in front of everyone at the Ministry, including the Daily Prophet reporters who took an unnatural glee in printing those ridiculous articles.

"See you." James gripped his wand and Disapparated with a soft crack.

Spyridon- The poll has ended and a 91% percent said that would rather have the rough chapter. The other 9% have stated they would rather have a delay in posting. I've been thinking about this and I've come to the conclusion that I will combine both. My aunt who I haven't seen in years is visiting next week for 7 days which during that time, I probably won't be writing. CH23 is planned out so I'm hoping to finish that. But instead of posting it next week, I will hold it back which should allow me to have one up on posting.

Song, the individual who has kindly helped me in editing the first four chapters, is busy. Instead of asking to edit all 220+ pages of this fanfic, I ask you guys if you know of someone who is beta reader and can help in editing the story, please send them to me.

Look to my profile for further updates.

On the forum, I've added a wrong BWL story that has caught my interest and has a quite surprising twist to the story that I find interesting as well as a story featuring a Harry that takes back control of his life from Dumbledore.

CHP23